



East Devon and Blackdown Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and East Devon District

Landscape Character Assessment & Management Guidelines

Version 1 – 2008

THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE ON THE FOLLOWING WEBSITES:

1. **East Devon AONB** – www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk
2. **Blackdown Hills AONB** – www.blackdown-hills.net
3. **East Devon District Council** – www.eastdevon.gov.uk

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Foreword

East Devon District covers an area of 314 square miles. From the River Exe and the outskirts of Exeter in the west it stretches 30 miles to Dorset in the east, and 15 miles from the World Heritage Coast to Somerset in the north. With the exception of the towns, these guidelines cover the whole of the district and the rest of the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which extends into Mid Devon and Somerset.

The quality and diversity of the East Devon landscape is one of our greatest assets, from the sheer, high cliffs of red sandstone and steep wooded combes to the high flat topped plateaux of the Blackdown Hills and an amazing variety in between of sea-salt marshes, river estuaries, heaths and rolling farmland. Our coastline forms part of England's only World Heritage Site designated for its natural environment. The East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty lies wholly within the District, together with the greater part of the Blackdown Hills AONB, covering about 66% of the district.

The 'characterisation' approach to landscape is based upon the principle that all landscape types are of value, not just the most prized landscapes. By identifying the features that define each landscape we can work towards conserving and enhancing local distinctiveness and reinforcing our sense of place. Characterisation provides the framework for us to better understand the geology, topography and soils and how they influence man's activities, combining to create intricate and distinct patterns of settlement, landscape features and habitats.

These guidelines and the assessment on which they are based highlight the differing landscape character throughout the area. They will inform new development through the planning system, farm and woodland management, habitat creation and enhancement work, all of which further influence the character of the landscape which is going through a period of considerable change due to climatic, economic and other development pressures.

It is therefore vitally important that all of us who value our exceptional countryside work together to conserve and enhance the landscape. I therefore commend this landscape character approach as an instrument to increase awareness of the need for landscape management and for guiding co-ordinated action in the District and AONBs for the years to come.

The guidelines were developed in consultation with stakeholder interests and we would like to take this opportunity to thank those who contributed, both financially and in kind, and especially Natural England, our Local Authority and AONB partner organisations.

Councillor Paul Diviani

*Chairman of East Devon District Council and
Chairman of Blackdown Hills AONB Partnership*

February 2008



1 Introduction

1.1 Context

These management guidelines are based on a detailed Landscape Character Assessment of East Devon, carried out between 2005 and 2007 by professional landscape consultants as part of a Devon-wide project. The area covered in these guidelines encompasses the whole of the East Devon district including the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and covers all of the Blackdown Hills AONB, including its extension into Somerset and Mid Devon district. The guidelines are based on the thirteen Landscape Character Types which make up the units of the landscape of the area covered.

The need for a more detailed Landscape Character Assessment was identified in the former East Devon District Local Plan and the Management Plans for both the East Devon and the Blackdown Hills AONBs (2004). These guidelines build on the previous Devon County Landscape Assessment (2002) and follow a nationally recognised landscape assessment approach (see section 2: The Landscape Character Assessment Process). Natural England, in its capacity as the national lead on landscape character assessment, welcomes the development of Landscape Character Assessment and such management guidelines, which are seen as an essential tool in the future management, conservation and enhancement of the landscape of the district and AONBs.

1.2 Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to encourage best practice in the maintenance and enhancement of the landscape. It is intended that the guidelines should provide an easily understood reference to help shape and guide landscape based plans, projects and schemes across the area, based on a widely endorsed assessment and detailed descriptions of the character types that make up the landscapes of East Devon and the Blackdown Hills.

It is anticipated that these guidelines will be used by planners, development control officers, farmers, land managers, foresters, wildlife and conservation agencies, countryside management teams, developers and a range of other agencies and organisations involved in landscape related matters.

The guidelines are not intended to provide a one-stop answer to any planning, development or land management query but rather to provide a framework within which answers can be derived. They are not meant to inhibit innovative planning, management or design, but have a key role to play in understanding how and where changes could take place whilst ensuring that the special characteristics and distinctive features of the landscape are conserved.

1.3 Consultation

In preparing this document key partner organisations, representing its potential audience, were involved in workshops and written consultation at two stages during 2007. The aims of this exercise were threefold:

- **To validate the key characteristics and descriptions of the landscape character types**
- **To agree the detail of the management guidelines**
- **To discuss the format, style and layout of the document**

A list of the consultees can be found in Appendix 2.

1.4 Relationship to other Plans

AONB Management Plans

The Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 requires management plans for AONBs to be produced, published and regularly reviewed by local authorities. By providing landscape management guidance, these guidelines contribute to the implementation of management plan objectives and policies.

Local Development Frameworks and planning applications

Policies set out in the Local Development Frameworks covering East Devon and the Blackdown Hills aim to ensure that any new development should respect and reinforce key characteristics and local distinctiveness and that the AONBs should be 'conserved and enhanced'. These guidelines help to articulate the elements that contribute to local character and provide a context for specific development proposals.

Parish Plans, Village Design Statements and other Design Guidance

A number of parishes have produced village design statements which describe the distinctive character of the village and surrounding countryside and identify design principles based on local character. These guidelines complement other more detailed guides, including design guidance for the built environment and farm buildings published by local authorities.

Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs)

Local BAPs set out a series of nature conservation actions for threatened and valued habitats and species. Some of the priority habitats are an integral part of the landscape and local character, for example lowland heath, and appropriate management will have advantages for both landscape character and biodiversity value.

1.5 Land Management

Changes in farming and forestry practices can potentially have a big impact on landscape character. These guidelines are intended to add a more local flavour to existing Joint Character Area descriptions and associated targeting statements for agri-environment schemes. They also provide an information base for the future targeting of these schemes. In respect of forestry and woodlands, the guidelines can help to steer the location, extent and nature of applications for felling licences and planting under the Woodland Grant Scheme.



2 The Landscape Character Assessment Process

2.1 Introduction

The process of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) describes the characteristic patterns and features of our countryside, and explains how an area has developed over time. It does not judge or rank the character of a place – it simply records it in a systematic way. The study area is divided into areas of broadly similar character by overlaying different layers of information, either in paper form or using Geographic Information Systems software. These layers include information about the landform, the underlying geology and soils and the influence of human activity as seen in patterns of settlement, land cover and differences in tree cover. National guidance¹ is followed to ensure that this is carried out in a consistent way.

2.2 Evolution of the process

Landscape assessment has developed from the pseudo-scientific studies of the 1970s and early 1980s and is now a powerful decision support tool for policy makers, planners and land managers. The methods now in use are all broadly similar, being strongly influenced by two pioneering studies initiated by the Countryside Commission in the late 1980s - The Mid Wales Uplands landscape assessment and The Warwickshire Landscapes Project - which led to the development of the Countryside Character approach in the early 1990s and the publication of The Character of England map in 1996. Most counties in England have now completed, or are in the process of completing, some form of landscape assessment to assist with planning and land management decisions. This interest comes at a time of considerable concern about the costs and environmental sustainability of farming, the loss of habitats and species in agricultural landscapes and the pressures for new development in the countryside. It is, in part, a recognition of the need to treat the countryside as an integrated whole and a recognition that this can only be achieved within a spatial framework that reflects and captures the richness and diversity of different landscapes. There is a growing realisation that the countryside cannot be protected by simply focusing on the 'best' bits, and increasingly it is being recognised that it is not enough to protect only our most valued landscapes (even if there was a consensus as

to which these are), but that every landscape makes a contribution - no matter how small - to the overall picture. Numerous Planning Policy Guidelines and White Papers endorse this approach and encourage a holistic, multi-functional view of landscape with a more comprehensive, but targeted 'character based' approach to rural decision making.

The growing interest in character based decision making has been made possible through the development of a more structured and systematic approach to landscape assessment, which clearly separates the processes of characterisation and evaluation and gives equal weight to the natural, cultural and visual dimensions of the landscape. However, despite the publication of national guidance, many assessments are still heavily biased towards visual considerations, focusing on what can be seen rather than trying to understand the processes that drive landscape evolution and change. If landscape assessment is to be of practical value as a decision making tool it must be able to do more than simply describe what can be seen. The assessment process should also provide an informed analysis of the way in which the landscape has evolved, as a basis for understanding the dynamics of current and future change. The assessment of landscape character should thus be concerned not only with identifying and describing the distinctive patterns that contribute to particular scenes but, perhaps more importantly, with understanding the reasons why the constituent physical, biological and historical components occur in repeating patterns and share certain aesthetic characteristics.

2.3 The Landscape Character Assessment process for East Devon and the Blackdown Hills AONB

The process of Landscape Character Assessment for this entire area was carried out using a 'bottom up' approach, beginning with the desk-based derivation of Land Description Units (LDUs) that cover the entire county of Devon. These units were then field surveyed, and, based on this combination of desk and field work, agglomerated into larger Landscape Character Types (LCTs) (see Figure 1 for diagrammatic representation of this process). These Types provide the most appropriate scale at which to derive Management Guidelines that aim to encourage the sustainable future development of these landscapes.

¹ Swanwick, C & Land Use Consultants, 2002. Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England & Scotland. The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.

2.4 The 'bottom up' approach – importance of the spatial framework

The effective use of Landscape Character Assessment as a decision support tool requires the creation of a structured, spatial framework for describing and evaluating the countryside. This framework operates at different spatial levels, ranging from the national/regional (1:250,000 – Joint Character Areas shown with a blue boundary), through the county/ district (1:50,000 – Land Description Units shown

with a grey boundary), down to the individual farm/site (1:10,000 – Historic Landscape Characterisation shown as coloured polygons), with each tier providing the most appropriate scale for a specific range of uses (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Assessment hierarchy for Landscape Character Assessment

Level 0	BIO-CLIMATIC ZONES (1:1,000,000)
Level 1	REGIONAL (1:250,000)
	LAND DESCRIPTION UNITS (LDUs)
Level 2	LOCAL (1:50,000)
Level 3	LANDCOVER PARCELS/ HLC UNITS (1:10,000)
Level 4	SITE FEATURES (1:1,250)

Joint Character Areas
(blue boundary)

Land Description Units
(grey boundary)

Historic Landscape
Characterisation
(coloured units)

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the different levels of assessment. The blue line below is the boundary between the Devon Redlands and Blackdowns Joint Character Areas.



2.5 Land Description Units

The fundamental building block at the landscape level that we have used for developing these guidelines is known as the Land Description Unit (LDU). Land Description Units are distinct and relatively homogenous units of land, each defined by a series of definitive attributes, so called because they define the extent of each spatial unit.

There are four attributes used to define Land Description Units at Level 2:

- **Physiography - the geology and landform**
 - **Ground type - the soils**
 - **Landcover - reflecting surface vegetation**
 - **Cultural pattern - which describes the structural component of the cultural landscape.**
- } these two together encapsulate the underlying natural dimension of the landscape

The natural dimension of the landscape (physiography and ground type) is mapped first, as it not only provides a context for analysing the historical evolution of the landscape, but also because the baseline attributes of relief, geology and soils have 'real' boundaries which can be readily defined. In practice this entails firstly defining the more immediately distinct areas, where the pattern of topography relates clearly to changes in geology and soil. Cultural attributes do not usually have such clearly defined boundaries, but because of the constraints that have historically been imposed on land utilisation by slope, soil fertility and drainage it is often possible to map cultural patterns at the landscape scale using the emerging Land Description Unit framework. It is an iterative process requiring comparison of all the data to help define the less immediately visible distinctions in the landscape. For example, a break in slope which coincides with a change in soil type and tree cover to the plateau above will be easily identifiable as a sharp boundary, where a few steps takes you into a clearly different landscape, whereas the transition between a dispersed and a nucleated settlement pattern in a rolling landscape maybe several kilometres wide and is likely to require examination of other information, for example historic landscape information, to help map a line to its best location.





The primary digital datasets used in defining Land Description Units include: geology, 10m contours, soils, farm census data, settlements, woodland, ancient woodland, Historic Landscape Characterisation, moorland, Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 base map, and the National Typology. (The scales of these datasets varied between 1:10,000 – eg Historic Landscape Characterisation, and 1:150,000 eg National Typology). See Appendix 4 for further details.

Each aspect of the analysis and the attributes defined is outlined below.

2.6 Physiographic analysis

Physiography is an expression of the shape and structure of the land surface as influenced both by the nature of the underlying geology and the effect of subsequent geomorphological processes. Two definitive attributes are used at Level 2, one defining the geological structure (and relative relief) of the unit and the other to describe the form (and relative relief) of the land surface. This is derived from interpretation of the relationship between geological and contour data. Physiographic boundaries should ideally follow clear 'breaks in slope' that are related to geological boundaries. Where there is no obvious break in slope (eg. the transition between the dip slope of an escarpment and an adjoining vale) a 'best fit' line (ie. a line that has been adjusted to match the surface landform) should be defined that reflects the geological boundary. (The primary data sources are the contour and geology – solid and drift).

2.7 Ground type analysis

Ground type is an expression of the soil forming environment and its influence in determining the surface pattern of vegetation and land use. Two definitive attributes are used at Level 2, one describing the nature of the underlying bedrock/drift, the other to reflect variations in the process of soil formation related to drainage and soil fertility. This is derived from interpretation of geological (rock type), soils and land use data. (The additional data sources are the paper based soils maps for the area).

2.8 Landcover analysis

Landcover is an expression of the type of vegetation (natural and man made) covering the land surface. Two definitive attributes are used at Level 2, one describing the predominant land use/type of farming, the other reflecting the contribution that trees and woodlands make to the character of the landscape. The broad pattern of primary land use and associated tree cover at the farm type level as related to the inherent physical (slope, drainage, fertility) and economic constraints within a particular area. (The additional data sources used are the Historic Landscape Characterisation, various woodland layers and farm census data).

2.9 Cultural pattern analysis

Cultural pattern is an expression of the structural component of the cultural landscape as reflected in the historic pattern of enclosure and rural settlement. Two definitive attributes are derived, one describing the broad pattern of village formation and settlement dispersion, the other reflecting the structure (size/tenure) of agricultural holdings. In addition to the other data sources noted, the Ordnance Survey base and Brian Roberts' settlement work (Routledge, 1996 - see Appendix 4) are used in this aspect of the analysis.

2.10 Merging the desk based information with the field surveys - definitive and descriptive information

The definition of discrete Land Description Units provides units which are the building blocks of the landscape. The four definitive attributes (physiography, ground type, land cover and cultural pattern) tell us much about each Land Description Unit, but not the complete picture. Descriptive information, such as the visual and perceptual aspects of landscape, must also be collected and this coverage of Land Description Units provides the meaningful and structured spatial framework for gathering this descriptive information about the landscape. Descriptive attributes include both character-based information (eg species associations, building styles, etc.), as well as qualitative information relating to the significance of particular attributes, their condition and their vulnerability to change. All of this information is electronically mapped.

Once the inherent character of the land has been described it is then much easier to understand and describe the more intangible aesthetic aspects of the landscape, such as scale, form and enclosure. Although these are the qualities which are most apparent to viewers on the ground, the fact that they are almost invariably controlled by relief, geology and soils (and the resultant surface pattern of vegetation and land use), explains why the Land Description Units defined by the process of overlay mapping can be used as a basis for defining Landscape Character Types and/or Character Areas.

The process of Land Description Unit mapping and subsequent characterisation with other descriptive data also enables broad patterns to be distinguished, which in turn makes it possible to begin to understand the relationship between the many factors that contribute to landscape character. The iterative nature of this process greatly assists in the understanding of how a particular landscape has developed and is the key to assessing the character of that landscape. It is much easier to evaluate the condition of a particular landscape, or its capacity to accept change, where this is underpinned by a working knowledge of how that landscape has evolved.

The process of deriving Character Types relies much on available visual and other perceptual information. The main sources for undertaking this process were the desk Land Description Unit information and the Land Description Unit field survey sheets, using a combination of definitive attributes with descriptive information collected through survey. It is an iterative process, and although many Character Types are easily defined by referring to the definitive and descriptive data, where the pattern is less clearly apparent then further discussion to achieve consensus may be used.

2.11 Field survey

The field survey therefore provides the opportunity to undertake a number of key tasks, including:

- **incorporating the visual/aesthetic/perceptual dimension**
- **recording the condition of the landscape, including both the ecological and cultural aspects**
- **verifying Land Description Units and identifying any refinements to their boundaries**
- **assessing any particular qualities, and/or problems in areas of particular pressure or sensitivity, including seascapes.**
- **deriving or reviewing Character Type boundaries and associated descriptions.**

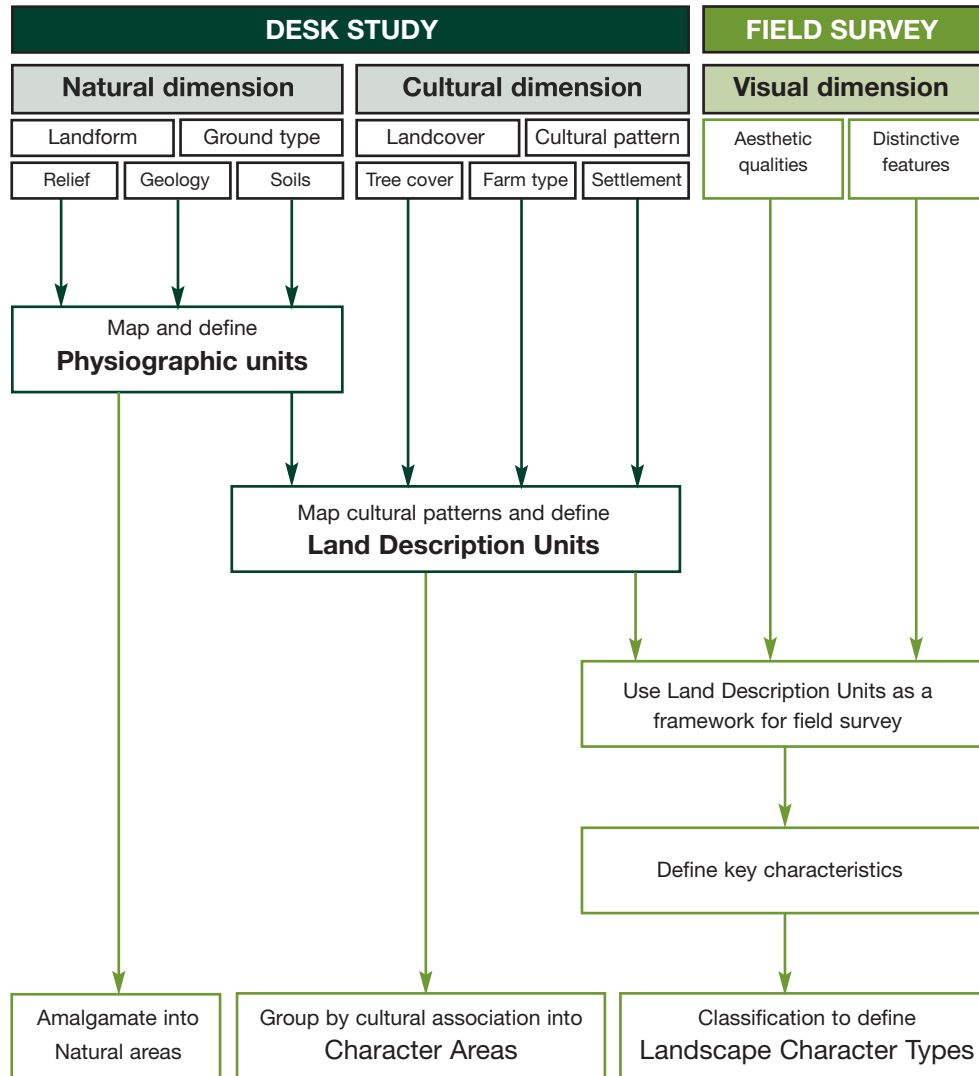
2.12 The characterisation process

Land Description Units are the building blocks of the landscape, and it is common to agglomerate these into larger Landscape Character Types and/or Character Areas. The latter refer to geographically discrete areas (eg The River Otter Valley), while the former is a generic term (eg River Valleys) and usually a particular type of landscape that can occur in numerous different places. Character Areas are typically used as a landscape unit for communicating descriptive information and very broad scale objectives, whereas Character Types are most appropriate for directing landscape management: Character Types were derived for the whole area.

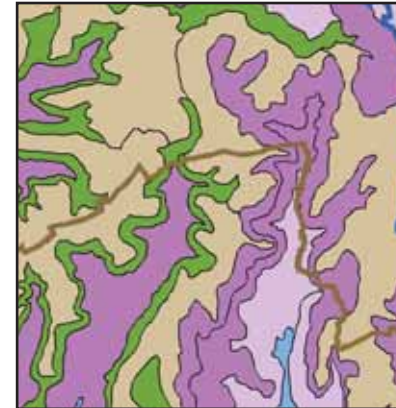
The reason for making a distinction between Landscape Character Types and Character Areas is largely a practical one. Landscape Character Types are very much a management tool and this is the level at which most countryside planning and land management activity takes place. For most people, however, landscape is strongly associated with place. Hence, although Character Areas often comprise several different types of landscape, they are a more appropriate vehicle for presenting countryside information to a public audience. It is envisaged that Landscape Character Areas will be derived for the whole of Devon at such time as the majority of the county has the information available from Land Description Unit field survey across the county.



Figure 2: The character assessment process



Map 1: Landscape Character Types and Land Description Units



The map extract shows an example of Landscape Character Types as coloured areas, with the constituent Land Description Units as dark boundaries nested within. (The brown and blue lines are administrative boundaries)

3 Using the guidelines

The overall assessment area was classified into 13 distinct Landscape Character Types, shown on the map overleaf. These types, or LCTs, contain within them 129 unique Land Description Units. Each Landscape Character Type is described and its Key Characteristics drawn out. It is further identified by a map associated with each of the Landscape Character Types. Each type is an aggregation of a number of individual units which all share most of their characteristics, such as landform, land cover and cultural pattern. This facilitates the derivation of management guidelines which are applicable to each of the component Land Description Units (LDUs) that make up each Landscape Character Type. Note that not all the types identified in Devon are found in this area and so the Landscape Character Type reference numbers in these guidelines do not necessarily follow sequentially.

The main body of the guidance is structured as follows:

Section 4 covers

- **AREA WIDE LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES covering generic landscape management guidelines and principles that apply across the whole of the area, including suggestions for further areas of work and research - users may wish to refer to in any broad based schemes or proposals**

Section 5 covers

- **LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE FOR LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES (LCT) – for users to identify those which apply specifically to their site/area**

Each Landscape Character Type is described as follows:

LCT Number and Name: eg LCT 1a: Open inland planned plateaux

Constituent Land Description Units (LDUs) that make up that LCT

(ie. Its sub units) eg LDU ... 104, 143, 145, 154

Location of the LCT

Description of the LCT

A map showing the extent of the LCT within district/AONB

Key Characteristics of the LCT eg High open flat plateau or Mixed cultivation on heavy soils

Illustrations and images of the LCT

Management Guidelines (not all of these headings will appear for every LCT)

Boundaries

Farming and land use

Field Pattern

Semi-natural habitats

Woodland

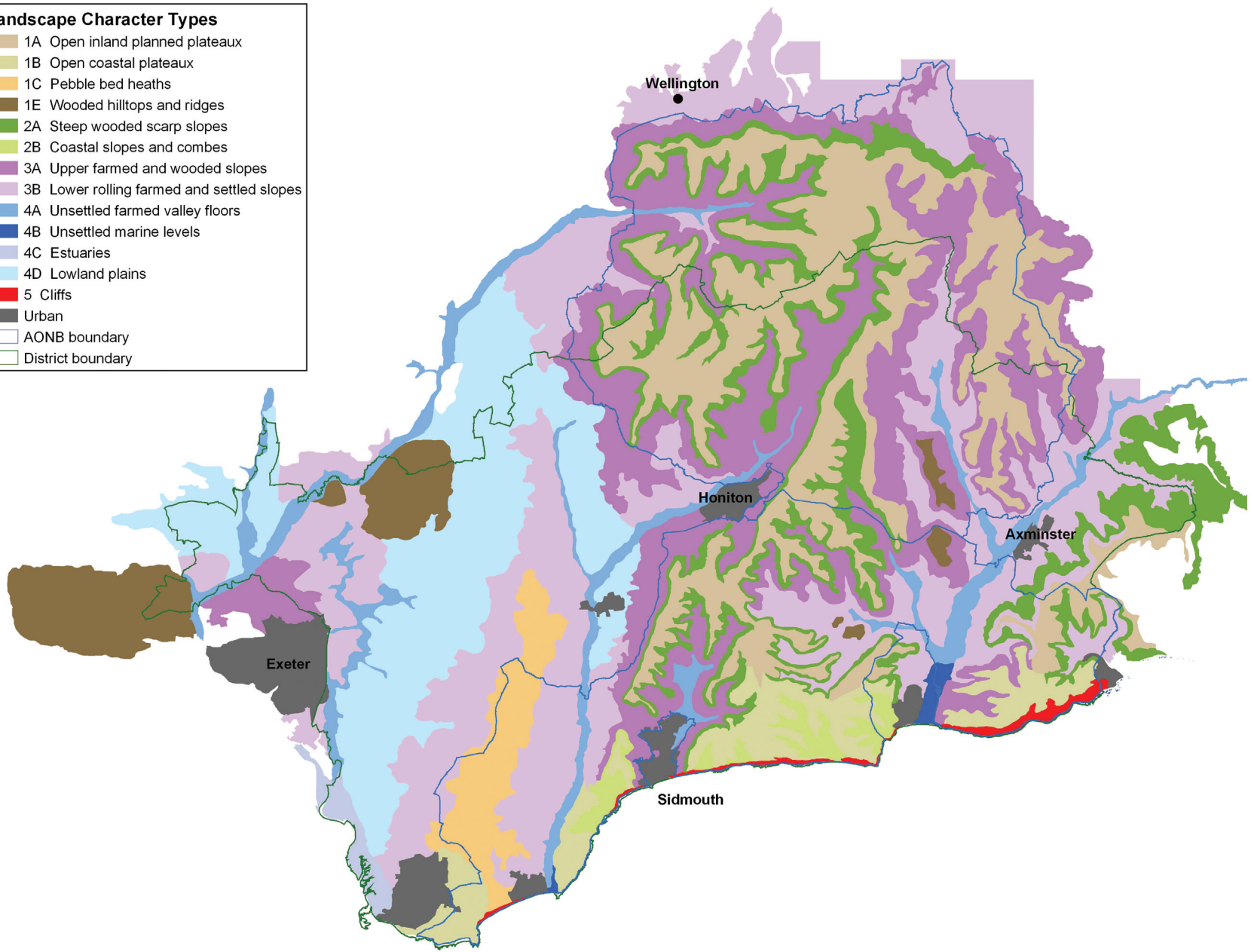
Informal recreation

Settlement and development

Transport network

Recommendations for further action – suggested areas for further work or research

- Landscape Character Types**
- 1A Open inland planned plateaux
 - 1B Open coastal plateaux
 - 1C Pebble bed heaths
 - 1E Wooded hilltops and ridges
 - 2A Steep wooded scarp slopes
 - 2B Coastal slopes and combes
 - 3A Upper farmed and wooded slopes
 - 3B Lower rolling farmed and settled slopes
 - 4A Unsettled farmed valley floors
 - 4B Unsettled marine levels
 - 4C Estuaries
 - 4D Lowland plains
 - 5 Cliffs
 - Urban
 - AONB boundary
 - District boundary



Map 2: Landscape Character Types

4 Area-wide Landscape Management Principles

Landscape element Boundaries

Guideline Conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging maintenance of the traditional hedge-laying cycle and reducing the need to coppice over-sized hedges.
2. Encouraging the conservation of hedgerow trees and avoiding the use of fertilisers near boundaries, to prevent reduction of floristic diversity.
3. Encouraging the retention of traditional locally distinctive styles of gates to prevent gaps in the field boundary pattern.
4. Encouraging timely management to rejuvenate out-grown hedges and tree rows, such as beech, that are vulnerable to wind-throw, by selective coppicing.
5. Encouraging the restoration of boundaries such as hedges and hedgebanks where they have been removed

Landscape element Farming and land use

Guideline Conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging the maintenance of traditional mixed farming to retain ecological corridors, biodiversity, field pattern and historical features.
2. Using Historic Landscape Characterisation to identify and influence future maintenance of historic and archaeological sites.
3. Encouraging management that includes conservation of the biodiversity and archaeological resources of farmland.

Landscape element Field pattern

Guideline Conserve by

1. Encouraging the retention and appropriate management of locally distinctive field patterns demarcated by hedges, earth banks or tree rows,

Landscape element Semi-natural habitats

Guideline Conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging the linking of small woods to hedges to conserve and extend ecological corridors.
2. Encouraging appropriate management of areas of permanent pasture, gorse, pebble bed heathland and rush.
3. Promoting eradication of Himalayan balsam and other invasive alien species in all habitats.

4. Promoting and providing management advice on the conservation of wetland habitats along stream valleys and near springs, such as linear wet woodland and wet pasture.
5. Encouraging management of ditches and verges to maximise their biodiversity potential by phasing time of cutting (ie late spring or summer cutting to promote early or late flowering species).
6. Encouraging appropriate management to maintain diverse mosaics of habitat, such as spring-line and valley mires, rough pasture and broadleaf woodland.

Landscape element Informal recreation

Guideline Conserve by

1. Encouraging continued good management and signage of the rights of way network and the use of locally distinctive wooden furniture on promoted routes and networks.
2. Seeking to ensure that any proposals for car parks and associated works contribute to local landscape character.
3. Ensuring that informal recreation provision contributes to the landscape and biodiversity interests of the AONBs.

Landscape element Settlement and development

Guideline Conserve by

1. Improving the integration of new and existing development with the wider landscape, recognising and where possible reinforcing the key characteristics of that Landscape Character Type.
2. Encouraging improved design and construction of horse-related infrastructure, where fencing and stabling can create a local landscape at odds with the traditional farmland landscape
3. Encouraging the use of local building materials, such as stone, cob, thatch and flint, in all new development.

Landscape element Transport network

Guideline Conserve and enhance by

1. Maintaining locally characteristic features in any road schemes.
2. Encouraging management that includes the planting of locally indigenous tree and shrub species (to help integrate roadsides with the adjoining farmed landscape) and the creation and maintenance of a balanced age structure.
3. Ensuring that bridges are maintained and restored with due regard to historic use of local materials and methods.
4. Seeking the use of traditional directional signs at junctions, using remaining examples as a template

Recommendations for further action

Landscape element Boundaries

1. Commissioning and providing advice on best practice for maintaining the wide range of hedgerow species.
2. Assessing the ecological, historic and landscape contribution of boundaries and seeking funding to assist with regular maintenance.

Landscape element Farming and land use

1. Promoting the preparation of design guidance to reduce the landscape impact of change of use from pasture fields to horse paddocks.

Landscape element Semi-natural habitats

1. Increasing public awareness of the species richness of local earth banks
2. Identifying species-rich ditches, banks and verges as a community exercise to promote greater awareness, based on a previous Devon County Council initiative.
3. Encouraging a programme of survey, identification and restoration of lowland heathland, scrub, species rich grassland and mire habitats.

Landscape element Settlement and development

1. Developing design guidance based on landscape character and local distinctiveness. An effective design guide should provide text and illustrative information on the use of locally indigenous materials, species and building styles, and provide examples of successful modern development.

Landscape element Transport network

1. Seek to promote local identity through the use of village gateway signage.



5 Landscape Management Guidelines for Individual Landscape Character Types



Landscape Character Type 1: Plateaux

LCT 1A OPEN INLAND PLANNED PLATEAUX

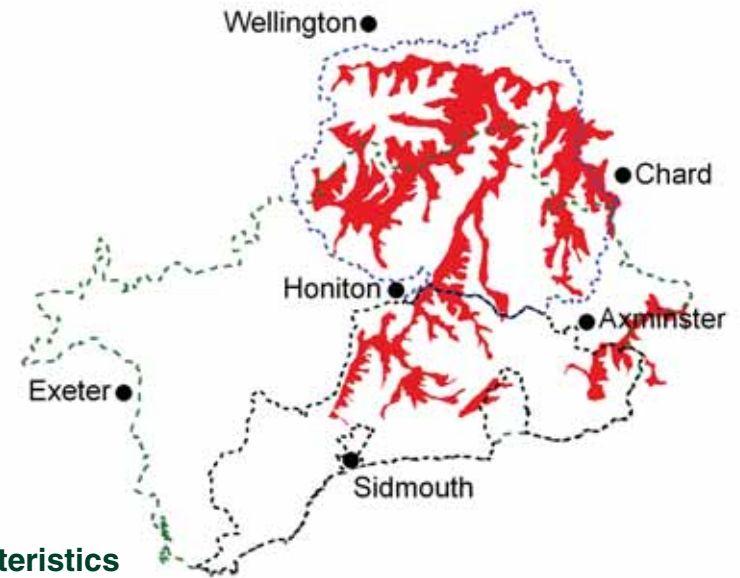
Constituent Land Description Units 104, 143, 145, 154, 155, 158, 159, 166

Location

These inland plateaux are located on high ground throughout the area, with a general north/south trend except in the NW, where the trend is east/west. In the south they are more obviously dissected by incised river valleys.

Description

This type is the most elevated of the plateau landscape types, open and clearly visible over a wide area, with an abrupt boundary to the adjoining landscape type – the steeply sloping scarp. Its landform is level to gently rolling, sloping at the edges and extending into long, narrow ridges, which share the same land use and landscape pattern, at a smaller scale and over more undulating terrain. Dairy farming is the dominant land use, with some mixed cultivation, on heavy brown soils underlain with clay-with-flints or Upper Greensand. The very uniform appearance is due to the regular field pattern and lack of woodland. Both field and road boundaries are low, fairly narrow earth banks with short (0.5-1m height) hedges and sparsely scattered hedgerow trees. Fields are of medium to large size, rectangular in shape, indicating 19th century enclosure of former common land, with some unenclosed areas and relic commons (now copses) and small conifer plantations. Beech is a prominent species in hedges and as a hedgerow tree, especially in the north, with oak and overgrown hazel hedges more common in the south and towards the edge of the plateaux. In the northern part of the plateaux some roads are lined with mature beech trees. Long straight roads occupy the centre of the plateau, with minor roads at right-angled junctions, winding and narrowing towards the plateau edge. Settlement is limited to isolated farmsteads and occasional clusters of buildings, usually at crossroads, except for 20th century settlement associated with airfields. (Older settlements span the boundary with the scarp). Although there are extensive views across and out of the plateaux, these may be obscured by woodland on the adjoining scarp slopes.



Key Characteristics

- High open flat plateaux
- Rectangular field pattern of medium to large scale
- Predominantly pastoral farming on heavy soils
- Well trimmed hedges on narrow earth banks
- Sparsely scattered boundary trees, usually beech with oak towards plateau edge
- Very uniform appearance
- Beech is frequent at the northern end of the area, with oak and hazel more common towards south and around edge
- Occasional copses and small conifer plantations punctuate the open farmland
- Long straight roads in centre, with narrow winding minor roads towards the edge
- Isolated farmsteads and clusters of buildings at crossroads; 20th century settlement associated with airfields
- Extensive views often blocked by woodland on boundary



Management Guidelines

Boundaries: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging management to maintain hedges at between 1 and 2 metres of woody growth to encourage species diversity. Plant up gaps and replace individual hedgerow trees as they become over mature or die, but ensure that they are appropriately spaced
2. Encouraging maintenance of earth banks.
3. Encouraging continuing management of beech hedges and tree rows to maintain local prominence, including replanting individual trees in rows to maintain continuity, while generally encouraging the planting of locally indigenous multi-species hedges.
4. Encouraging management of ditches and verges to ensure their continued contribution to the ecological network.

Farming and land use: conserve by

1. Encouraging the maintenance of pastoral farming as the dominant land use throughout this type.

Semi-natural habitats: conserve and enhance by

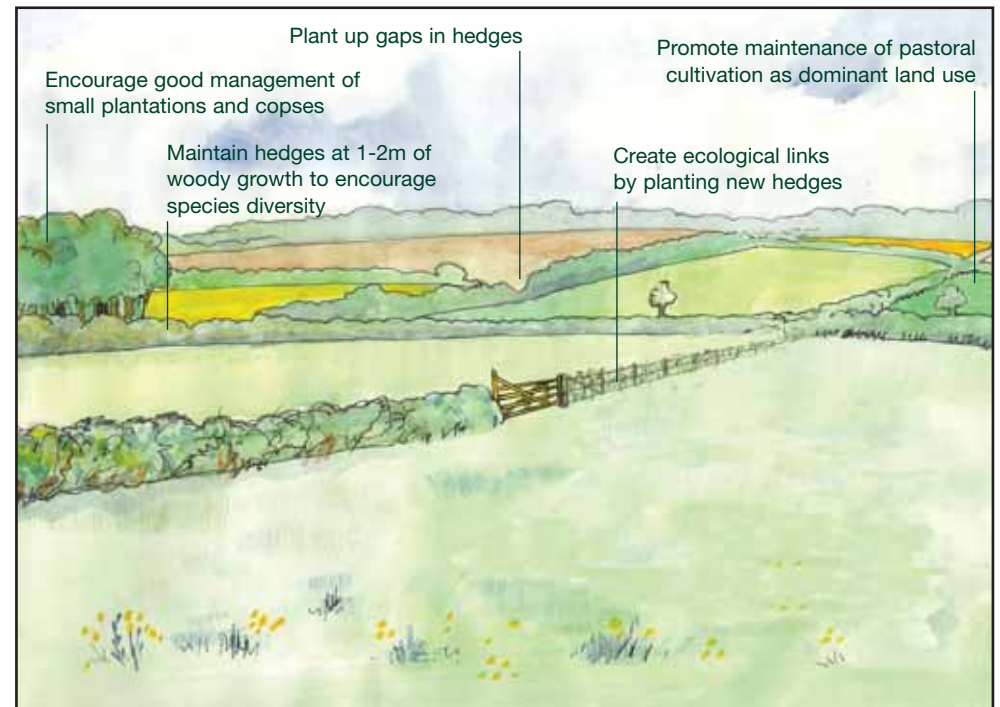
1. Encouraging the management of scrub and bracken invasion to improve wet heath habitats.
2. Encouraging an integrated approach to the management of the biodiversity and archaeological resource.
3. Encouraging good management of the small copses in damp patches and the creation of ecological links to existing field boundaries by planting new hedges.

Woodland: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging the retention and management of small estate plantations and coverts, which are characteristic of this landscape type.
2. Encouraging a change to broadleaf cover or manage as (wet) heath, where appropriate, as conifer plantations mature to increase local biodiversity and create more effective ecological corridors.

Settlement and development: conserve by

1. Maintaining the existing settlement pattern; resisting anything other than small-scale development.
2. Locating development away from the plateau edge, where it would be more visible.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Recommendations for further action

Semi natural habitats: Identifying and surveying areas of heathland, acid grassland and species-rich permanent pasture

Informal recreation: Balancing the recreation and educational (biodiversity and historic) value of unenclosed areas of permanent pasture ground, (many of which have already been identified as former turbaries, and their biodiversity potential assessed). Most are located away from roads and are accessible only by pedestrian rights of way.

Transport network: Discussing with highways authorities ways of reducing signage without jeopardizing road safety, as the local pattern encourages speeding, while signage detracts from the openness and unsettled character.

Landscape Character Type 1: Plateaux

LCT 1B OPEN COASTAL PLATEAUX

Constituent Land Description Units 03, 144, 156, 17, 39

Location

Along the coast intermittently between Exmouth and Lyme Regis, separated by river valleys and dissected by combes, and extending up to 4km/2 miles inland.

Description

High, open, gently undulating or rolling plateaux, dissected by deep combes and with notable coastal influence on windblown vegetation (especially dominance of blackthorn). The field pattern is of medium to large regular planned fields, delineated by dense low hedges (often elm) with occasional hedgerow oaks. Land use is mixed farmland, with arable dominant, and some localised recreational use. There is very little woodland except conifer shelterbelts and small deciduous woodland. The road network is sparse but this type is well provided with rights of way, with the South West Coast Path prominent along the coastal edge. The settlement pattern is very sparse, with isolated farms and small hamlets, often distinguished by their uniform appearance, and a few scattered small coastal resorts. The local geology is reflected in soil colour and texture, with Red Sandstone and flint between Exmouth and Sidmouth, often apparent in banks along sunken lanes, and paler chalk soils east of Sidmouth. From rights of way along the coastal edge of this type there are extensive views of the adjoining dramatic cliff landscapes.



Key Characteristics

- High, open plateaux, separated by river valleys and dissected by combes
- Windblown vegetation
- Regular medium to large field pattern
- Dense low hedges (often elm) with occasional hedgerow oaks
- Mixed land use, mainly arable
- Little woodland
- Few roads but many rights of way
- Very low settlement density
- Influence of geology on soil colour
- Extensive views along coast



Management Guidelines

Boundaries: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging the appropriate maintenance of hedges, in particular to benefit elm hedgerows and ensure their survival in the face of Dutch Elm Disease.
2. Encouraging the planting and maintenance of hedgerow trees, using exposure-tolerant locally indigenous species.
3. Encouraging gapping up of hedges with locally indigenous species.

Semi-natural habitats: conserve by

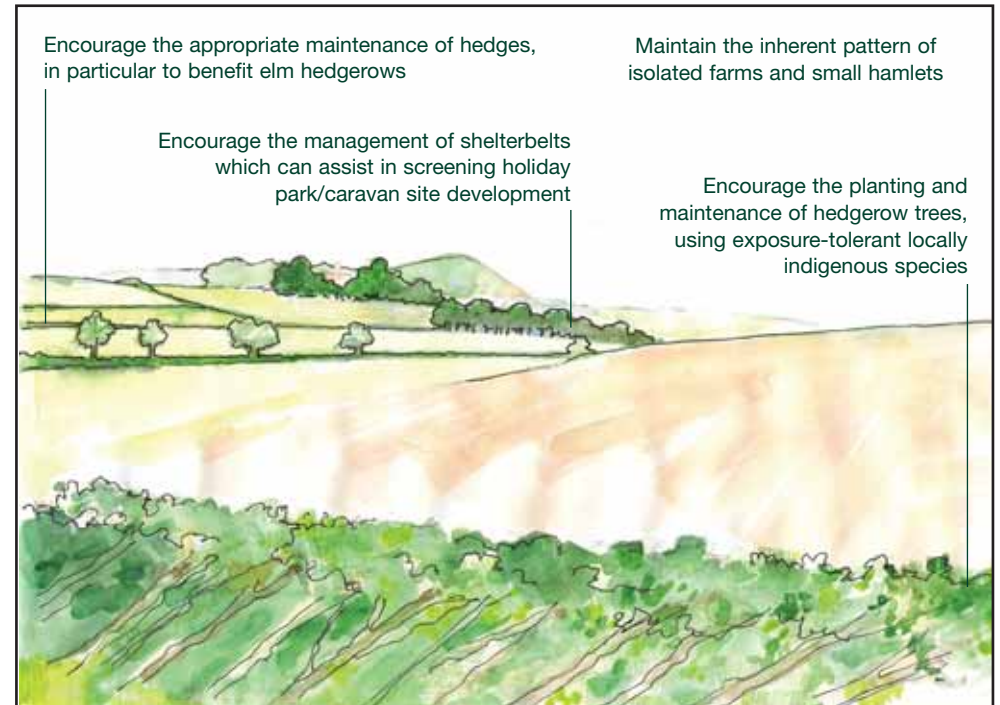
1. Managing chalk and coastal grassland, hedgerows, small copses and field margins for biodiversity interest.
2. Encouraging the maintenance and management of shallow stream corridors and their associated wetland habitats.

Woodland: conserve by

1. Encouraging the management and restoration of conifer shelterbelts, which provide some visual diversity and can assist in screening holiday park/caravan site development within the wider landscape. Encourage the planting of a deciduous edge to reduce visual impact.
2. Encouraging the reversion of conifer plantations to heath at maturity or felling, where soils are appropriate.

Settlement and development: conserve by

1. Maintaining the inherent pattern of isolated farms and small hamlets
2. Discouraging development that extends to the edges of Land Description Units, where it is more visible in the wider landscape.
3. Discouraging development in unsettled areas and ensuring that development around existing coastal settlements enhances local landscape character and contributes to screening recent development.
4. Encouraging caravan sites to enhance their landscape setting so as to conserve local landscape character.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Recommendations for further action

Boundaries: Consider protection of non-hedged earth banks and evaluation of their historic importance.

Landscape Character Type 1: Plateaux LCT 1C PEBBLE BED HEATHS

Constituent Land Description Units 107, 899

Location

North/south ridge west of Ottery St Mary south to the coast between Exmouth and Budleigh Salterton, forming the western edge of the Otter valley

Description

A high, level to gently undulating plateau forming a long north-south 'finger' north from Budleigh Salterton. This landform reflects its unusual geological formation. The Bunter Pebble Beds influence vegetation and land use and provide building materials for adjoining Land Description Units. The poor soils support extensive open areas of dry lowland heath with gorse and silver birch, interspersed with scattered groups of pine or beech and conifer plantations. These are used for forestry, nature conservation and recreation, with some military use locally. There are beech woods towards the edge of the plateau. Much of this area appears remote, with the road network mainly along the western edge and very little settlement within the East Devon AONB. At its northern end, outside the AONB, there is a large, well-treed modern settlement.



Key Characteristics

- High, level to gently undulating open plateau
- Extensive lowland heath, conifer plantations and some beech woods
- Mix of unenclosed heath and conifer plantations
- Major north-south route along western edge, with some minor roads
- Unsettled, except at northern end (outside AONB)
- Distinctive geology influences vegetation and land use
- Extensive recreational and biodiversity use
- Panoramic views



Management Guidelines

Field pattern: conserve by

1. Seeking to maintain unenclosed character by restricting change to that required for temporary enclosure for military or nature conservation uses.
2. Ensuring that where enclosure is essential, it remains low key and unobtrusive.

Semi-natural habitats: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging appropriate management, restoration and extension of open heathland areas, including scrub management by grazing where possible.
2. Ensuring that restoration of worked out quarries is primarily to heathland habitat wherever possible.

Woodland: conserve and enhance by

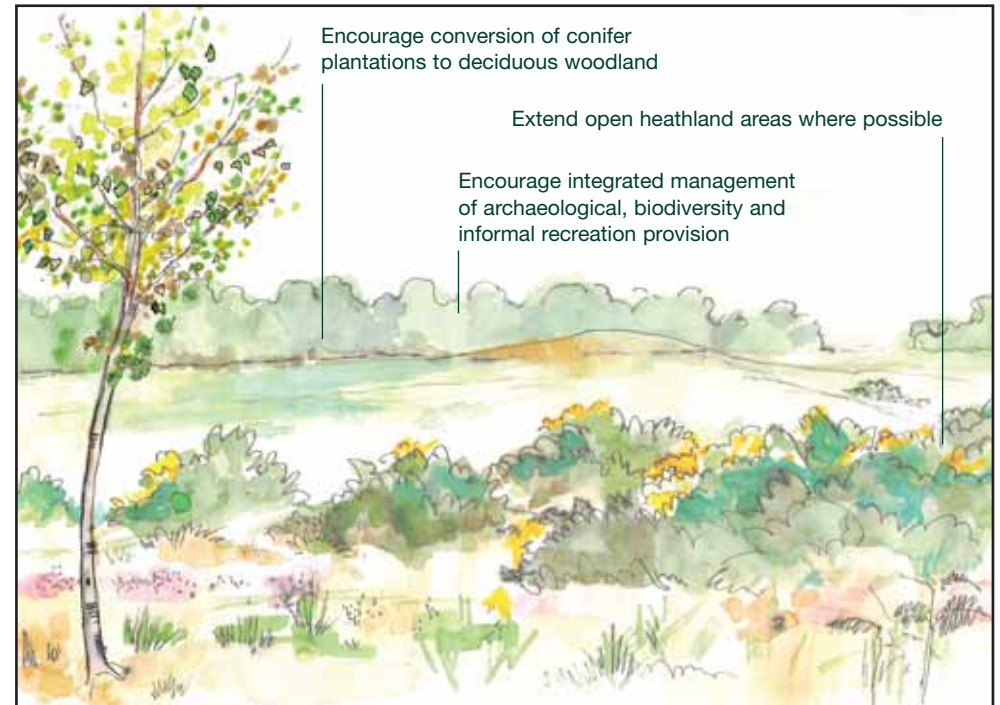
1. Encouraging appropriate reversion of plantations to broadleaf woodland or heathland as conifer plantations mature.
2. Encouraging continued management of beech woodland and conifer plantations.
3. Encouraging an integrated management approach to protect biodiversity interest and informal recreation provision.
4. Seeking amendment of boundaries and the planting of a deciduous edge where conifer plantations are replanted for overriding economic reasons.

Settlement and development: conserve by

1. Maintaining the inherent unsettled character of the AONB-designated area.
2. Restricting any expansion of settlements to the area outside the AONB boundary

Transport network: conserve by

1. Maintaining the existing road hierarchy.
2. Resisting any pressure to straighten or widen minor roads, or to alter road junctions, unless essential for road safety.
3. Encouraging sensitive, low-key signage for directions to recreational attractions.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Recommendations for further action

Semi-natural habitats: Encourage the provision of information about the biodiversity value and interest of heathland habitats.

Landscape Character Type 1: Plateaux

LCT 1E WOODED RIDGES AND HILLTOPS

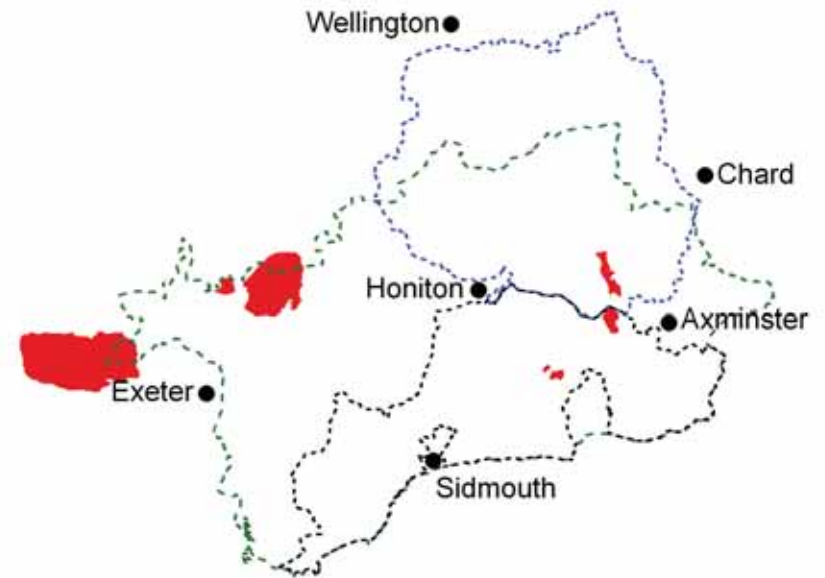
Constituent Land Description Units 01, 12, 13, 14, 15

Location

Outliers at the end of 'fingers' of plateaux Landscape Character Type, mostly in the central southern area, as at Shute Hill.

Description

Small, visually distinct hills and ridges separate from but sharing many characteristics of the plateaux. They rise out of the surrounding lowlands as a mix of woodland and irregular fields, occasionally with large open fields on the summit which may be arable, contrasting with the pastoral use elsewhere. The field pattern is small to medium scale, delineated by earth banks and hedges, and tree rows, with frequent hedgerow trees. There are significant areas of ancient woodland, spring-line mires, unimproved pasture and great species diversity, especially in hedges. This is an almost entirely unsettled area, with narrow winding lanes enclosed by medium-height (2-3m) hedges on earth banks; this lack of development and the presence of areas with neither roads nor rights of way underpin the remote, unspoilt character of this type.



Key Characteristics

- Small hills and associated small ridges, outliers of the plateaux
- Small to medium irregular fields with spring-line mires
- Species-rich hedgerows and tree rows, ancient woodland and great species diversity
- Mixed woodland and some pasture; hilltop fields may be arable
- Unsettled
- Narrow enclosed winding lanes
- Limited views out
- High and remote



Management Guidelines

Boundaries: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging the conservation of small hedgerow oaks and other tree species by planting or tagging selected saplings.
2. Encouraging management that maintains the pattern of wide, medium height hedges.

Farming and land use: enhance and restore by

1. Encouraging retention of the pattern of wooded slopes with small pasture fields.
Semi-natural habitats: conserve and enhance by
1. Managing gorse, willow and silver birch to prevent scrubbing up of unimproved pasture
2. Encouraging the creation and planting of new earth banks and hedges to provide strong ecological links between the areas of woodland and pasture fields.
3. Encouraging current practices which are favouring the presence of bluebells in ancient woodland and open areas.
4. Encouraging management of spring line mires.

Woodland: enhance by

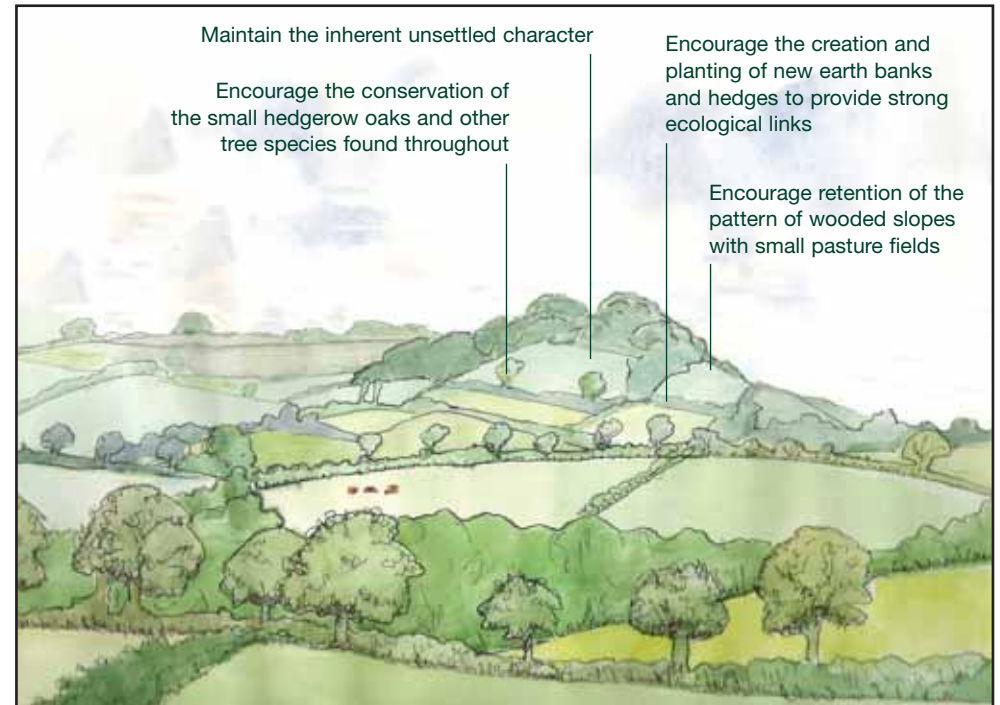
1. Encouraging the use of broadleaves to build on the wealth of locally indigenous species.
2. Encouraging natural regeneration when conifer coupes are felled, with appropriate publicity/information to counter suggestions of neglect.

Settlement and development: conserve by

1. Maintaining the inherent unsettled character.

Transport network: conserve by

1. Maintaining the network of very narrow winding lanes.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Recommendations for further action

Woodland: Commission surveys to confirm species richness in woodland edge/hedges, as in Land Description Unit 12, where traces of older woodland are evident. Encourage survey of the historic/archaeological significance of internal woodland boundaries and evidence of coppicing and pollarding.

Landscape Character Type 2: Scarp slopes

LCT 2A STEEP WOODED SCARP SLOPES

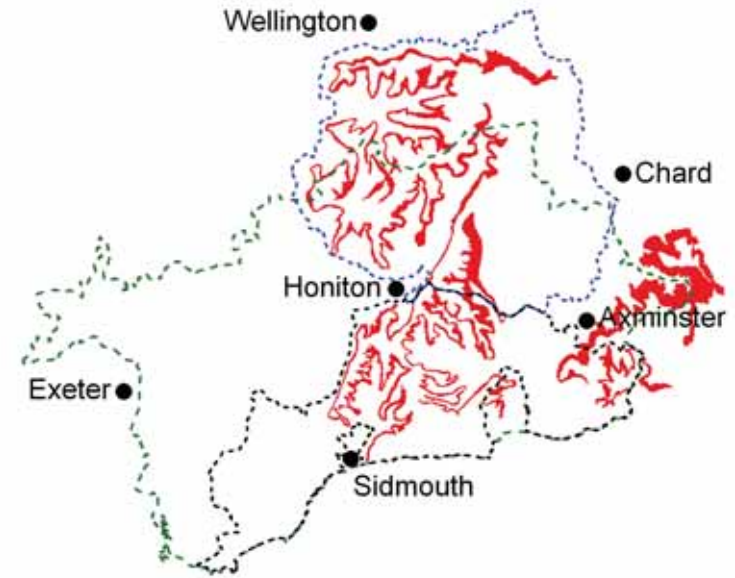
Constituent Land Description Units 103, 140, 152, 160, 161, 162, 167, 168, 58

Location

This Landscape Character Type is closely related to the plateaux type (LCT 1) and occurs throughout the East Devon and Blackdown Hills AONBs. It is distinguished from the less steeply sloping land below by being generally wooded and lacking settlement.

Description

This type consists of narrow ribbons of steeply sloping land immediately below the edge of the high plateaux. They are very restricted in width but extensive in length. Neither woodland nor pasture dominates overall, although they may do so in individual Land Description Units. The land cover is typically permanent grassland and woodland, with unimproved pasture, wetland scrub and small pockets of heathland. Although much of this type appears unenclosed, a network of earth banks and medium to tall bushy hedges with many hedgerow trees encloses an intricate mosaic of small irregular fields carved out of the woodland. This is a secluded area, very lightly settled, with infrequent farm buildings, and hamlets clustered at crossroads along the sparse network of narrow winding lanes frequently overhung with trees. The underlying poorly-draining Greensand geology gives rise to a high density of semi-natural habitats, including regionally important spring line mires, unimproved grassland, wet woodland, ancient semi-natural woodland and scrub.



Key Characteristics

- A narrow band of steeply sloping land immediately below the plateau edge
- Mixed woodland and semi-improved or unimproved pasture
- Pastoral cultivation, with small-scale irregular field pattern
- Springline mires
- Lightly settled
- Narrow winding lanes with well treed banks
- Occasional long views out over adjoining valleys
- Many patches of semi-natural habitats, including springline mires and scrub



Management Guidelines

Boundaries: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging the planting of oak as a hedgerow tree, with beech in the northern part of this type.
2. Encouraging the conservation and good management of roadside trees and the maintenance of characteristic tall earth banks in some Land Description Units.

Semi-natural habitats: conserve and enhance by

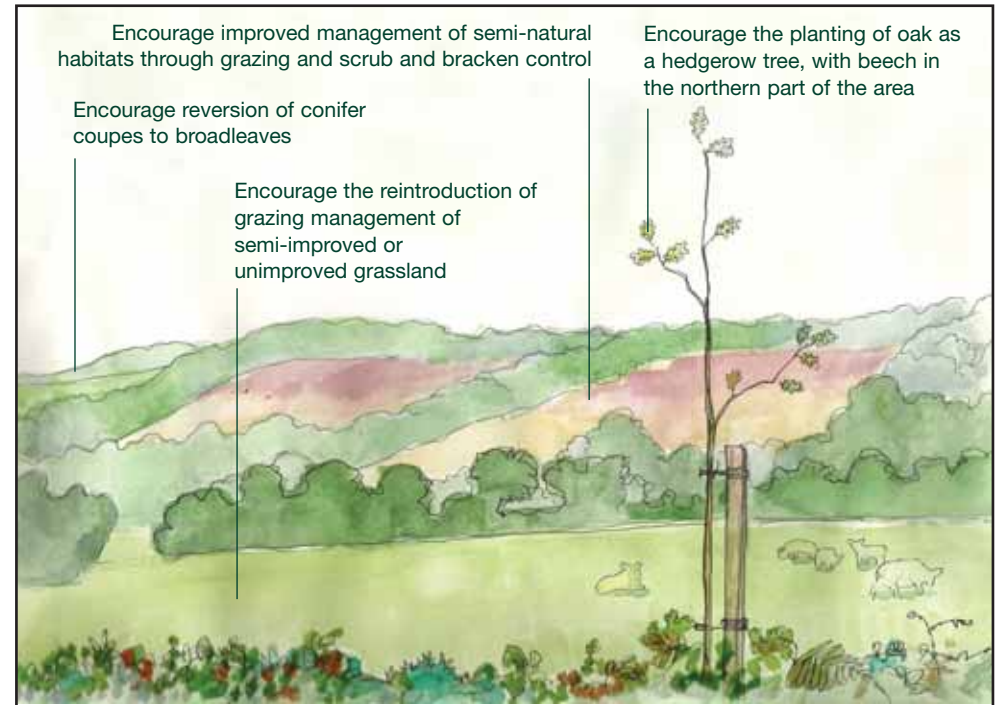
1. Encouraging improved management of semi-natural habitats, such as mires, gorse scrub, wet meadows, ancient woodland, heath and small copses, through grazing and scrub and bracken control.
2. Encouraging the reintroduction of grazing management of semi-improved or unimproved grassland to help control scrub encroachment.
3. In Land Description Units with discrete rather than extensive woodland, encouraging the management of earth banks and other semi-natural habitats to provide ecological corridors.

Woodland management: conserve, enhance and restore by

1. Encouraging reversion to broadleaf woodland when coniferous coupes are cleared, especially in areas of former Ancient Woodland, or
2. Encouraging medium to long term reversion from conifer to heathland and the introduction of scrub control with grazing management.

Settlement and development: conserve by

1. Maintaining the inherent sparsely settled character.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Landscape Character Type 2: Scarp slopes

LCT 2B COASTAL SLOPES AND COMBES

Constituent Land Description Units 04, 29, 59, 61, 63, 64, 95

Location

A series of incisions in the south coast, between Sidmouth and Beer, excluding the river valleys and estuaries of the Otter, Sid and Axe.

Description

Individual small coastal areas of generally wooded slopes and branching valley systems. Many valleys are narrow and steep, with well wooded upper slopes and remnant orchards, and have an intimate, tranquil and enclosed character. Other valleys are more gently sloping and have an open scrubby downland character, especially along their upper boundaries. Land cover is a mix of unenclosed woodland and small to medium irregular fields, mainly in pastoral cultivation and with much wet pasture. This gives way to scrub along the upper edge of the adjoining cliffs. There is little settlement on the steeper slopes, but within the wider combes historic settlements often occur as a series of hamlets, occasionally with a strong tourism influence where there is reasonable vehicular access. The road network is generally narrow and winding, with very little vehicle access to the coast. Steep paths down to beaches and the South West Coast Path provide extensive rights of way for pedestrians and access to the high, open and exhilarating top slopes with their extensive coastal views.



Key Characteristics

- **Narrow, steep valleys or more open shallow systems**
- **Coastal influence in exposure, vegetation and extensive views**
- **Mix of unenclosed woodland, especially along watercourses, and small to medium irregular fields**
- **Mainly pasture, with wet pasture and scrub**
- **Earth banks**
- **Old settlements in combes, with stone as dominant building material**
- **Narrow winding roads and limited vehicle access to coast**
- **Extensive coastal rights of way with steep paths down to beaches**
- **High, open and exhilarating on top slopes, grading to intimate and enclosed in lower valley**
- **Remnant orchards**



Management Guidelines

Boundaries: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging management that maintains the characteristic earth banks, often with mature tree rows on top.
2. Encouraging management and restoration of historic field boundaries.

Farming and land use: conserve and restore by

1. Encouraging retention and restoration of permanent pasture throughout, especially on the plateau boundary.
2. Maintaining unimproved pasture.

Field pattern: conserve and enhance by

1. Retaining the unenclosed pattern of the wooded parts of this type.
2. In pastoral areas, encouraging (a) retention of the irregular, small to medium, boundary pattern; (b) good management of field boundaries, including gapping up where necessary; and (c) the retention and maintenance of locally distinctive field gates.

Semi-natural habitats: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging the management of scrub, especially gorse, to prevent scrubbing up.
2. Encouraging the conservation and improvement of ecological corridors by planting new hedges or copses to link discrete woodlands.

Woodland: conserve and enhance by

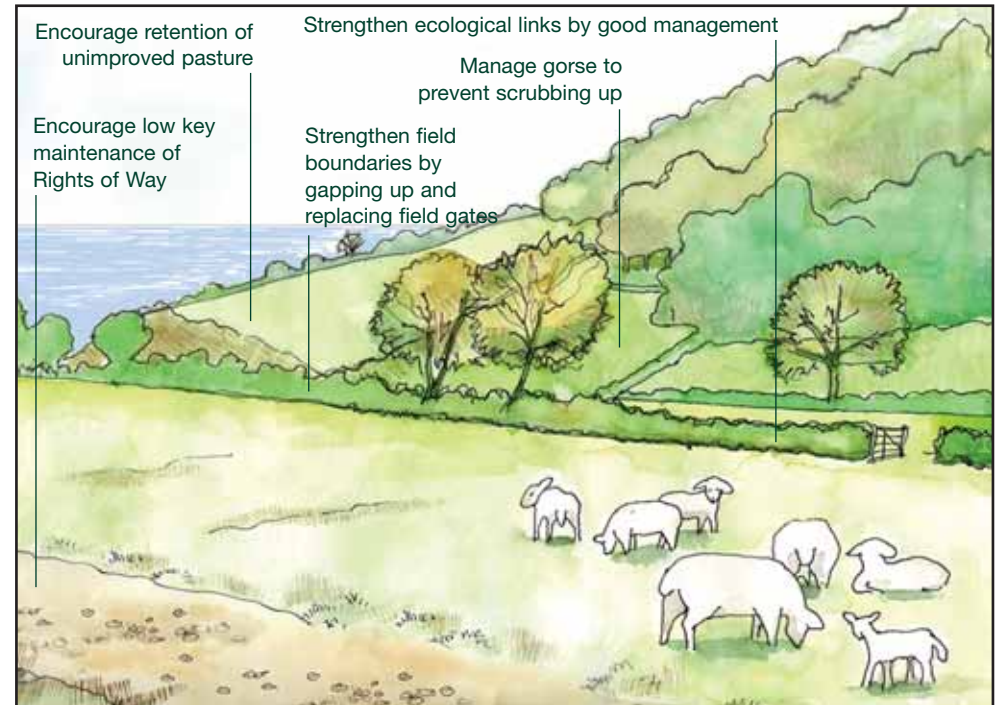
1. Encouraging the planting of broadleaves where new or extended woodlands are appropriate.

Informal recreation: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging the appropriate maintenance of rights of way along the coast (South West Coast Path) and through combes down to the beach.
2. Encouraging the creation and maintenance of rights of way through appropriate woodland areas, to broaden recreational opportunities and reduce pressure on the coastal combes.

Settlement and development: conserve by

1. Maintaining the inherent pattern of sparse settlement.
2. Ensuring that recreation and leisure-related infrastructure along the coast and at the mouth of combes are of a scale, size and type that contribute to the unspoilt character and tranquillity of the cliff landscapes in the adjacent Landscape Character Type.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Recommendations for further action

Farming and land use: Promoting the maintenance and restoration of orchards.

Landscape Character Type 3: Valley slopes

LCT 3A UPPER FARMED AND WOODED SLOPES

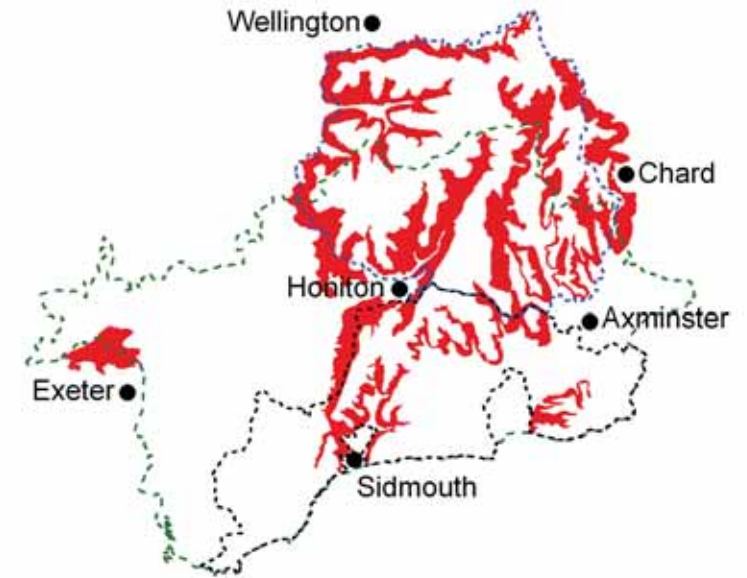
Constituent Land Description Units 100, 101, 102, 163, 164, 165, 169, 31, 65, 98, 99

Location

Frequently occurring extensive areas along the upper slopes of river valleys throughout the area.

Description

Undulating sloping land on greensand below the steep wooded scarp, where deciduous woods and copses on the upper valley slopes grade to pastoral/mixed cultivation, with some arable cultivation along the lower edge, especially in the southern part of this type. An intricate mix of small to medium fields with irregular boundaries of very wide earth banks with low, species-rich hedges and many trees, creating a well-treed and intimate character. Oak and ash are the most prominent species. Upper stream valleys are often steep and V-shaped, without a distinct valley floor, but with wetland along streams and in patches throughout. The settlement pattern is of isolated farms and occasional large houses, with some deserted farmsteads and small villages linked by very narrow winding lanes. Red brick and stone are often used in dwellings, with rusty corrugated iron roofs to stone farm buildings (these would formerly have had slate, clay tile or thatch roofs). There is little 20th century development. Occasionally this type occupies the slopes immediately below the plateau, but it is less steep and less wooded than the scarp slopes. The feeling of remoteness is strengthened by lack of settlement and limited views out, where vegetation acts as a screen or filter.



Key Characteristics

- Undulating upper valley slopes below the scarp slope
- Well treed pastoral farmland, with arable cultivation on lower slopes
- Small to medium size fields with irregular boundaries
- Deciduous woods and copses, especially on hilltops and upper slopes
- Very wide, usually low, species-rich hedges with many hedgerow trees
- Dispersed settlement pattern of isolated farms and small villages
- Very winding narrow lanes
- An intimate and intricate landscape with views out confined by vegetation
- Remote and with little 20th century development



Management Guidelines

Boundaries: enhance by

1. Encouraging the conservation of hedgerow trees by planting or tagging selected saplings, to maintain and enhance the well-treed character of this type.

Field pattern: enhance and restore by

1. Encouraging the retention and management of existing field boundaries to maintain the mixed pattern of small to medium fields.

Semi-natural habitats: conserve and enhance by

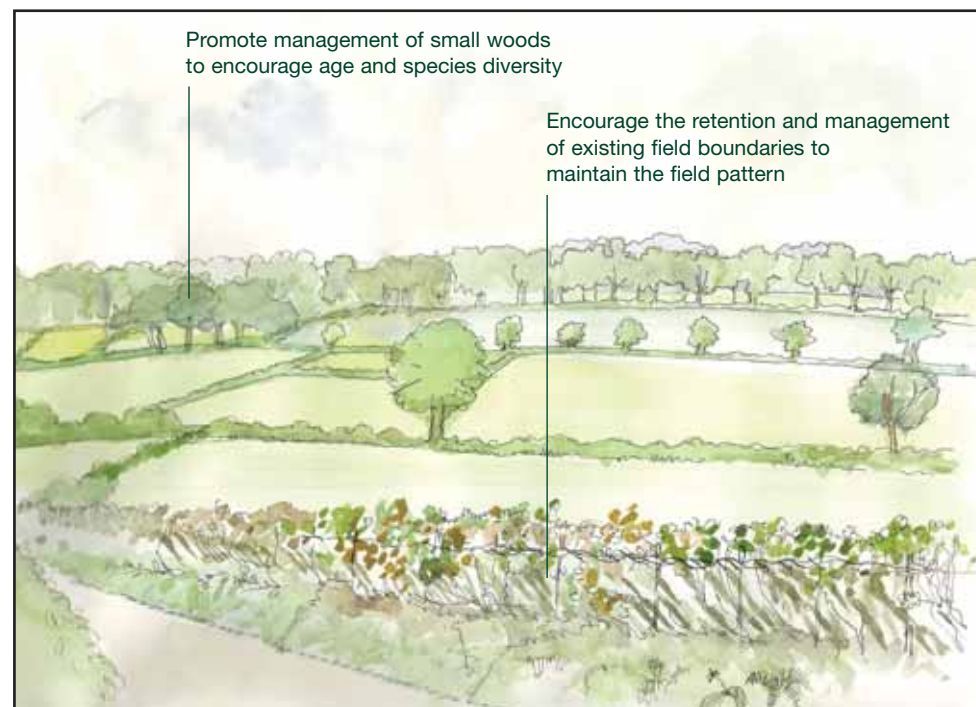
1. Encouraging management via appropriate grazing regimes to control scrub and maintain unimproved grassland, flushes and wildflower meadows.

Woodland: conserve and enhance by

1. Promoting management of small woods to encourage species and age diversity and a diverse ground flora.
2. Encouraging the planting of deciduous edges around conifer plantations and new hedges to link to existing ecological corridors.
3. Encouraging the reversion of conifer plantations to broadleaf woodland.

Settlement and development: conserve and enhance by

1. Improving integration of 20th century development within the wider landscape, especially by replicating the distinctive treed earth banks and small woods of this Landscape Character Type.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Recommendations for further action

Boundaries: Promote the biodiversity benefits of less intensive management and raise awareness of the potential damage from fertiliser run-off or spray.

Landscape Character Type 3: Valley slopes

LCT 3B LOWER ROLLING FARMED AND SETTLED SLOPES

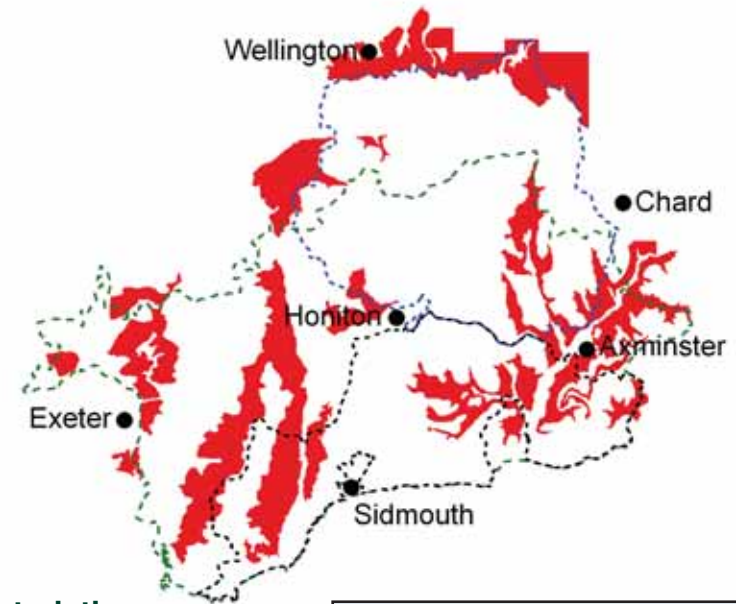
Constituent Land Description Units 105, 106, 112, 113, 121, 138, 147, 148, 16, 18, 21, 22, 24, 30, 32, 34, 35, 36, 72, 91, 92, 93, 94

Location

This Landscape Character Type occupies a sloping transitional zone above the flat river valleys and tributaries but below the steeper, generally more wooded slopes.

Description

Gently rolling slopes above the valley floor, less steep than the upper slopes and with less woodland and more settlement. Mainly loamy brown soils with damp patches, predominantly dairy with some fodder crops, with orchards on the drier slopes near farmsteads and tree rows along the many streams and ditches which give this type a bushy, damp character and contribute to its wooded appearance, due also to the many hedgerow oaks and small copses. This is a small to medium scale landscape, with variable size fields in an irregular pattern, delineated by wide low hedges and distinctive tall earth banks. Mainly a clustered settlement pattern with small farm, occasionally densely settled, with a variety of building ages and styles, unified by the widespread use of stone. The road network is of winding, sometimes sunken lanes with deep cuttings locally through sandstone banks, particularly distinctive at the entrance to a settlement.



Key Characteristics

- Gently rolling landform, sloping up from valley floor
- Variable size fields with wide, low boundaries and irregular pattern
- Pastoral land use, often with wooded appearance
- Many hedgerow trees, copses and streamside tree rows
- Settled, with varied building ages, styles and settlement size
- Much use of stone as building material
- Winding, often sunken lanes
- Streams and ditches
- Tranquil and intimate



Management Guidelines

Boundaries: conserve by

1. Encouraging appropriate management of low wide hedges at a height of 1-1.5m/ 3-5 feet, to maintain bushy, mixed species character.

Farming and land use: conserve and restore by

1. Maintaining the open character of the lower slopes of tributary valleys, where hedges are uncharacteristic and relatively recent introductions into open meadow landscapes.
2. Promoting the maintenance and restoration of orchards.
3. Promoting appropriate design and management of equine activities, fishing lakes and game bird shoots to ensure their contribution to local landscape character.

Woodland management: conserve by

1. Promoting management to favour (a) the development of a varied age structure, (b) long-lived locally indigenous species, and (c) linkage to the hedgerow and stream-side network to provide strong ecological corridors.

Settlement and development: conserve and enhance by

1. Ensuring that any development contributes to local distinctiveness and assists integration of settlements within the landscape by the use of indigenous species.
2. Resisting development that would contribute to the coalescence of settlements, including ribbon development.

Transport network: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging appropriate maintenance of the tall earth banks and sandstone road cuttings.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Recommendations for further action

Transport network: Resist pressures to widen or straighten the characteristic winding lanes, especially (a) within settlements, where junction improvements can dilute the organic street pattern; (b) where it would result in the destruction of ditches and verges; (c) where it would result in the destruction of sandstone cuttings, especially at the entrance to villages.

Landscape Character Type 4: Valley floors

LCT 4A UNSETTLED FARMED VALLEY FLOORS

Constituent Land Description Units 108, 109, 146, 66, 90

Location

The general trend of river valleys is north-south, ending at the south coast, but the upper Culm valley runs east-west from the plateau uplands.

Description

This type has a low, flat open landform associated with upper river valleys, framed by vegetation on the floodplain edge and of a small scale. This encloses a landscape of shallow streams and lightly wooded mixed farmland in a small to medium regular pattern, with some orchards and occasional large arable fields. There is no settlement - farmhouses are on land above the floodplain, outside this type. Winding lanes along the edge of the floodplain are edged with bushy hedgerows, with bridges or fords across watercourses. Several of these valleys are accessible only by rights of way, so remain tranquil despite occasional visual intrusion from traffic on roads. Earth banks are not a characteristic but hedges are sometimes present within the open valleys.



Key Characteristics

- Open flat landform, often with distinct vegetated floodplain edge
- Shallow watercourses screened by riparian vegetation
- Hedges, not banks, generally on the boundary with rising land
- Pastoral land use, with wet meadows and some arable, with variable field sizes
- Unsettled
- Narrow winding lanes
- Open internally, with views out screened by boundary vegetation



Management Guidelines

Boundaries: conserve and restore by

1. Encouraging maintenance of hedges by shorter hedge-laying rotation than elsewhere, to mitigate effect of rapidly growing wetland species and avoid use of flail on over-sized branches.
2. Encouraging the appropriate management of ditches by infrequent or rotational management as required to conserve rare plants and insects.
3. Discouraging any further enclosure of floodplains, except temporary fencing for biodiversity conservation.

Farming and land use: conserve and restore by

1. Seeking to retain unimproved permanent pasture and wet grassland.
2. Promoting the management and restoration of orchards

Semi-natural habitats: conserve and enhance by

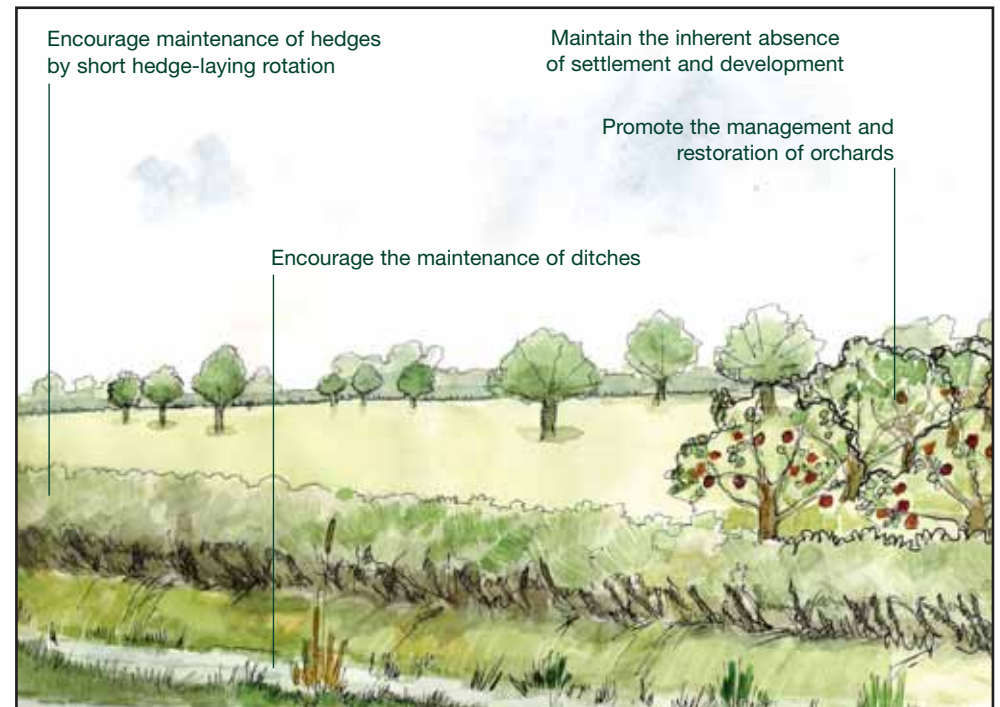
1. Encouraging the retention and management of riparian trees for age and species diversity, promoting locally indigenous wetland species.

Woodland: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging woodland management for age and species diversity, promoting locally indigenous wetland species.
2. Discouraging any spread of conifer plantations.

Settlement and development: conserve by

1. Maintaining the inherent absence of settlement and development.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Recommendations for further action

Semi-natural habitats: Explore the potential to restore wetland habitats along watercourses.

Landscape Character Type 4: Valley floors LCT 4B UNSETTLED MARINE LEVELS

Constituent Land Description Units 49, 898

Location

Lower section river valleys of the Axe and Otter.

Description

This type is distinguished from the farmed and settled river valleys by marine influence: saline intrusion precludes settlement and limits agricultural cultivation. It consists of lower river valleys and their associated semi-natural habitats, which form a mosaic of open water, ditches, saltmarsh and grazing marsh, often of high biodiversity value. Generally they contain neither settlement nor roads and are unenclosed internally, although contained by the rising landform on their drier land boundaries. Their inherent unspoilt and unsettled character may be compromised by development in adjoining Landscape Character Types. This type has strong sensory characteristics, such as the colour and texture of habitats, smell of mudflats, sound of seagulls and the sight of sunlight reflecting off the sea.



Key Characteristics

- Flat unsettled river valley
- Marine influence on terrestrial habitats, such as reedbed and saltmarsh
- Unsettled and unenclosed
- Proximity of roads and settlements in adjoining areas reduces tranquillity
- Traditional floodplain habitats of high biodiversity value
- Open water
- Extensive informal recreational use



Management Guidelines

Farming and land use: conserve by

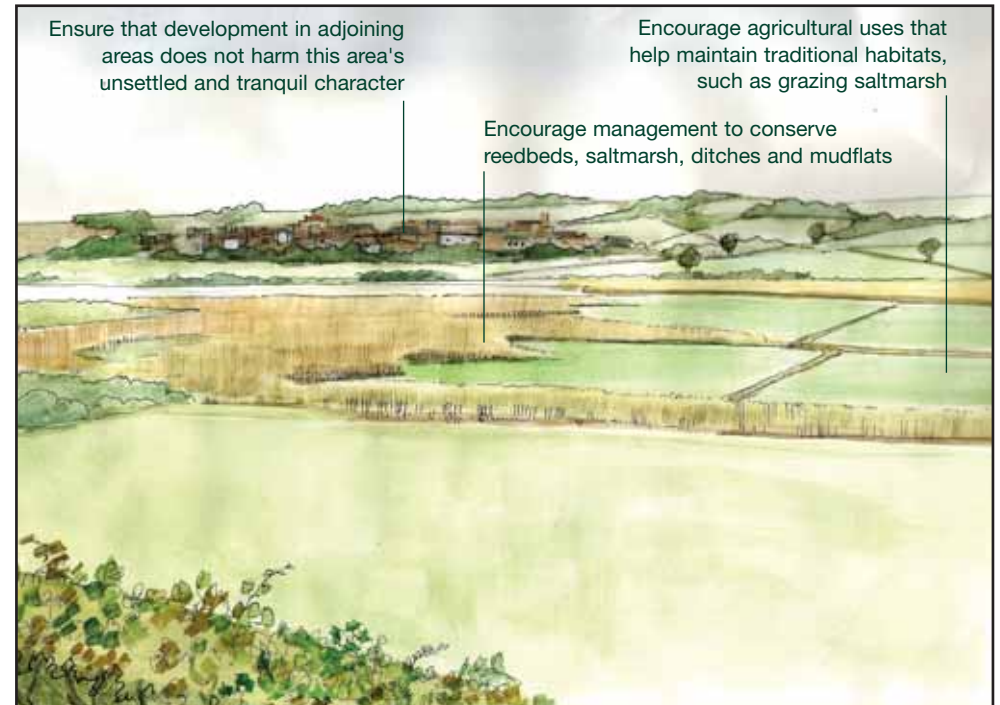
1. Encouraging agricultural uses which help maintain traditional habitats, such as seasonal grazing on saltmarsh and management of ditches as field boundaries.

Semi-natural habitats: conserve by

1. Encouraging management to conserve reedbeds, saltmarsh, grazing marshes, ditches and mudflats.

Settlement and development: conserve by

1. Ensuring that development proposals within or adjoining this type would not harm its unsettled and tranquil character.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Landscape Character Type 4: Valley floors

LCT 4C ESTUARIES

Constituent Land Description Units 415

Location

On the eastern side of the Exe estuary between Topsham and Exeter [small parts of Land Description Unit 415 lie outside East Devon District]

Description

This type consists of the estuaries of major rivers along the south coast of the county, which range from wide sandy bays to extensive mudflats and reedbeds. Here the type consists of the flat river valley floor (excluding the river) of the river Exe, which is found west of Exmouth and extends northwards to Topsham. It is a very extensive open expanse of intertidal mudflat with limited areas of sand and saltmarsh. When covered with water it reflects the colour of the huge skies above contrasts with the rising landform to either side, which frames it and provides low level enclosure and shelter. This is wildland, unenclosed and covered with a shallow layer of salt water at each high tide, therefore without settlement, roads or footpaths. It is by its tidal nature unmanageable, and is used largely for water-related recreation. It differs from the river valleys along the south coast through its larger scale and the dominance of water.



Key Characteristics

- Extensive estuary opening onto south coast
- Wide, shallow area of damp mudflats, covered with shallow salt water at high tide; area defined by permanently dry land to east and west
- Some sand and saltmarsh away from mouth
- Enclosed and sheltered
- Low accessibility but well used for water-related recreation
- Unsettled and without highway network
- Peaceful despite settlement in adjoining Land Description Units
- Focus for adjoining landscape units: highly valued and visually attractive landscape

Management Guidelines

Farming and land use: conserve by

1. Ensuring that upstream abstraction for agricultural or industrial uses does not reduce freshwater flows.

Semi-natural habitats: conserve by

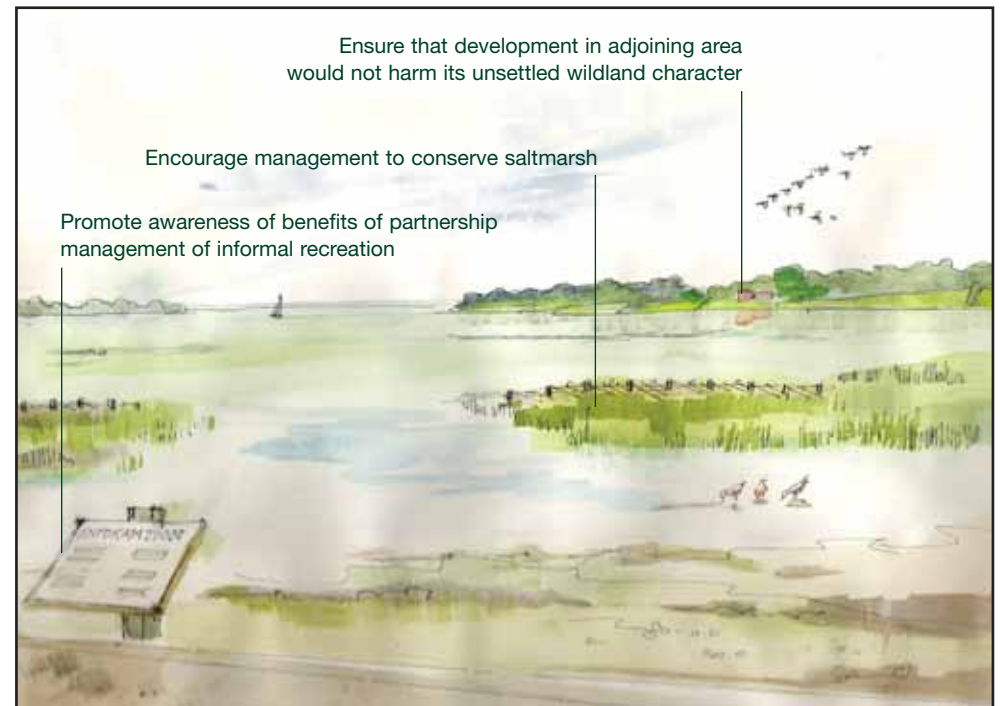
1. Encouraging management, where possible, to conserve saltmarsh.

Settlement and development: conserve by

1. Ensuring that development proposals adjoining this type would not harm its unsettled wildland character.
2. Permitting development in this type only where there will be no negative impacts on its biodiversity value and wildland character.
3. Encouraging screening of and an appropriate scale of development in adjoining areas to reduce impact.
4. Ensure consideration of sensitivity and appropriateness of applications for recreation or leisure-related infrastructure.

Informal recreation: conserve by

1. Controlling moorings and water-based activities to maintain tranquillity.
2. Regulating timing and zoning of non-peaceful water-based activities to minimise impact; promoting education in and awareness of benefits of partnership management.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Landscape Character Type 4: Valley floors

LCT 4D LOWLAND PLAINS

Constituent Land Description Units 025, 026, 028, 056, 077, 516, 879, 880,

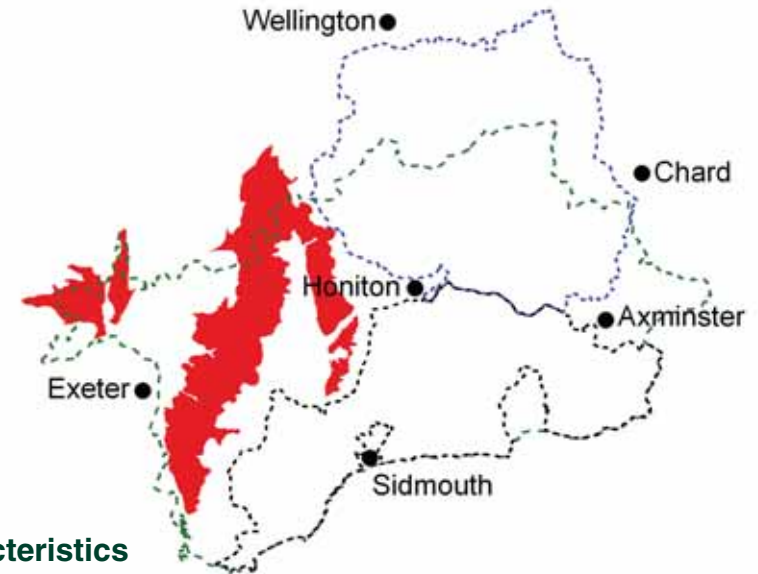
Location

Low-lying flat areas between shallow river valleys and lower rolling farmed and settled slopes, except Ashclyst Forest and NE of Westhill. Often interfluves between two rivers.

[Land Description Units 25, 28 and 516 lie partly outside East Devon District; Land Description Unit 880 is mainly outside East Devon District]

Description

These are areas of lowland adjacent to river valleys, distinguished by absence of wetland habitat or river valley character. They are flat and in mixed cultivation, with a variety of field size and pattern. Arable cultivation is frequently locally dominant, with orchards and paddocks present but not frequent. Wide hedges, often elm-dominated, and hedgebanks are distinctive, often with prominent hedgerow oaks. Tall sandstone banks to either side of highways are a local feature on the edge of settlements. The settlement pattern is variable, often dense, with much commercial development along key transport routes or clustered at key junctions. In less densely settled areas there is often a strong presence of Victorian architectural detail and use of red brick in buildings and boundary walls, often related to estate farms, with substantial farm buildings and estate cottages. The highway network consists generally of narrow winding lanes, with wider, straighter more modern roads in some parts.



Key Characteristics

- Level to gently sloping landform
- Mixed farmland, often in arable cultivation
- Small discrete broadleaf woodlands
- Regular medium to large field pattern with local variation
- Wide low roadside hedges and banks with hedgerow oaks
- Settled, with mixed pattern of large villages, hamlets or isolated farms
- Some villages significantly enlarged and modified by 20th century expansion
- Victorian estate cottages and large farm buildings
- Extensive commercial development
- Long views over low hedges
- Surprising feeling of remoteness in some parts, despite general level of development



Management Guidelines

Boundaries: conserve and enhance by

1. Encouraging gapping up of hedges with locally indigenous species
2. Encouraging the appropriate management of hedges, in particular to benefit elm hedgerows and ensure their survival in the face of Dutch Elm Disease
3. Encouraging the maintenance and increased planting of hedgerow oaks, to provide vertical elements and help screen development

Farming and land use: conserve by

1. Encouraging traditional mixed farming as the dominant land use throughout this type
2. Encouraging the retention of traditional pastoral farming

Semi-natural habitats: conserve by

1. Encouraging the maintenance and restoration of orchards

Settlement and development: conserve by

1. Where development is permitted, including woodland and copses in development proposals, to increase screening and ecological links
2. Encouraging a characteristic low, small-scale pattern in new development, including industrial uses
3. Where development is permitted, using red brick for boundary walls in and around settlements
4. Encouraging housing development which reflects and respects local Victorian scale, detailing and materials.

Informal recreation: renew character by

1. Encouraging the provision of recreational opportunities and a good rights of way linkage in all development and restoration



Management Guidelines Illustration

Landscape Character Type 5: Cliffs

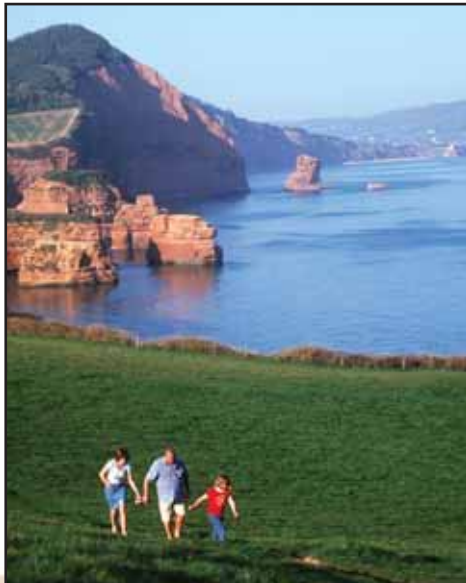
Constituent Land Description Units 02, 116, 60, 62

Location

South coast intermittently between Exmouth and Lyme Regis.

Description

The cliffs are distinguished above all by their predominantly vertical landform, softened in many areas by well-vegetated landslips on the lower half of the cliff face which contain a mix of exposure-tolerant species of high biodiversity value; also by their location on the south coast, marine influence and clearly exposed geological features. Sandstone, chalk and flint are all revealed by erosion and illustrated by strong colour variation. They are unenclosed, unsettled and are inaccessible, with neither roads nor rights of way, although the South West Coast Path follows the top of the cliffs in adjoining plateaux andcombe Landscape Character Types and provides extensive views along the coastline. There is also limited access along the shingle beaches at their foot. This is an exposed and dramatic landscape.



Key Characteristics

- Steeply sloping cliffs, near-vertical in places
- Unenclosed, unsettled and inaccessible
- Narrow shingle beaches at foot of cliffs
- Accessible only along cliff top via South West Coast Path or in some places along beach
- Extensively vegetated slumped landslips on lower half of cliff locally
- Clearly represented geological features
- Extensive views along coastline from cliff-top South West Coast Path
- Exposed, with dominant marine influence

Management Guidelines

Informal recreation: conserve by

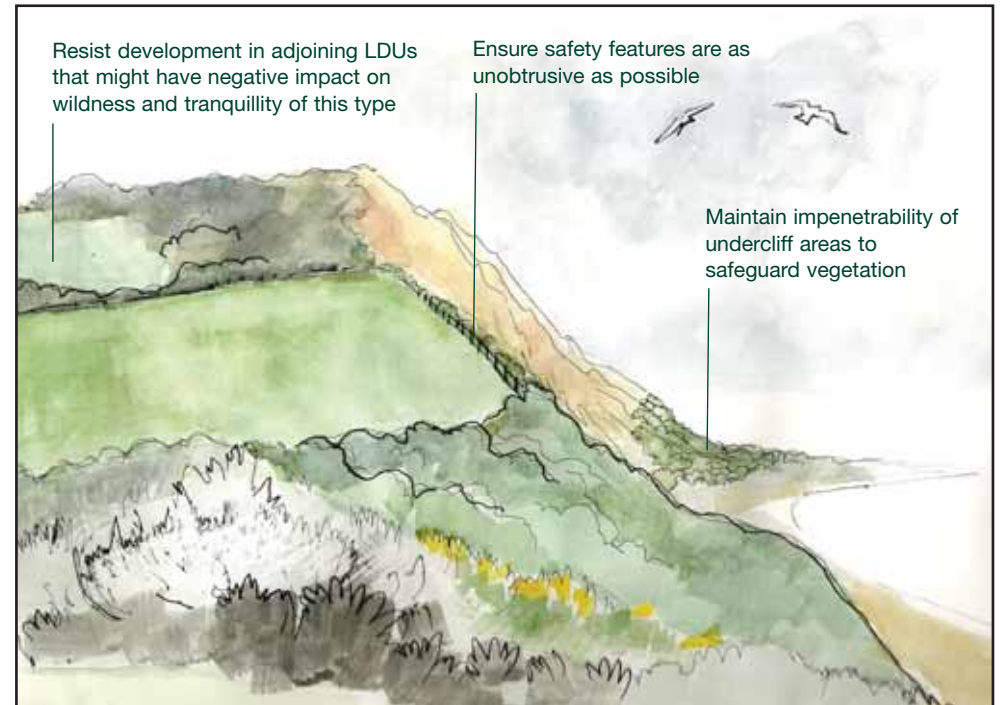
1. Ensuring that access and safety features are as unobtrusive as possible to avoid dilution of unspoilt character.

Semi-natural habitats: conserve by

1. Maintaining impenetrability of undercliff areas to safeguard vegetation from disturbance; highlight their nature conservation importance without encouraging exploration.

Settlement and development: conserve by

1. Ensuring that development in adjoining Land Description Units avoids any negative impact on the wildness and tranquillity of this type and resisting any further development within.



Management Guidelines Illustration

Recommendations for further action

Semi natural habitats: Consider monitoring cliffs to ascertain impacts of climate change on rate of erosion/further land slips. Ensure that any proposals impacting on the Undercliffs National Nature Reserve cross refer to the site management plan.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Useful Contacts

Local authorities

East Devon District Council

Council Offices
The Knowle
Sidmouth
Devon
EX10 8HL
Tel: 01395 516551
www.eastdevon.gov.uk

Mid Devon District Council

Phoenix House
Phoenix Lane
Tiverton
Devon
EX16 6PP
Tel: 01884 255255
www.middevon.gov.uk

South Somerset District Council

Council Offices
Brympton Way
Yeovil
Somerset
BA20 2HT
Tel: 01935 462462
www.southsomerset.gov.uk

Taunton Deane Borough Council

The Deane House
Belvedere Road
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 1HE
Tel: 01823 356356
www.tauntondeane.gov.uk

Devon County Council

County Hall
Topsham Road
Exeter
Devon
EX2 4QW
Tel: 0845 155 1015
www.devon.gov.uk

Somerset County Council

County Hall
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 4DY
Tel: 0845 3459166
www.somerset.gov.uk

AONB Units

Blackdown Hills AONB

St Ivel House
Station Road
Hemyock
Cullompton
Devon
EX15 3SJ
Tel: 01823 680681
www.blackdown-hills.net

East Devon AONB Partnership

East Devon Business Centre
Heathpark Way
Heathpark
Honiton
Devon
EX14 1SF
Tel: 01404 46663
www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk

Organisations and Agencies

Environment Agency

South West Regional Office
Manley House
Kestrel Way
Exeter
Devon
EX2 7LQ
Tel: 08708 506506
www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)

Devon FWAG
Unit 4
Halthaies
Bradninch
Exeter
Devon
EX5 4LQ
Tel: 01392 882080

Somerset FWAG
Environment Department
County Hall
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 4DY
Tel: 01823 355427

www.fwag.org.uk

Forestry Commission

South West England Regional Office
Mamhead Castle
Mamhead
Nr Exeter
Devon
EX6 8HD
Tel : 01626 890666
www.forestry.gov.uk

Natural England Devon

Level 2, Renslade House
Bonhay Road
Exeter
EX4 3AW
Tel: 01392 889770

1st Floor, Estuary House
Peninsula Park
Rydon Lane
Exeter
Devon
EX2 7XE
Tel: 01392 352000

Natural England Somerset

Riverside Chambers, Castle Street
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 4AP
Tel: 01823 285500

www.naturalengland.org.uk

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

South West Regional Office
Keble House
Southernhay Gardens
Exeter
Devon
EX1 1NT
Tel: 01392 432691
www.rspb.org.uk

Wildlife Trusts

Devon
Cricklepit Mill
Commercial Road
Exeter
EX2 4AB
Tel 01392 279244
www.devonwildlifetrust.org

Somerset
Tonedale Mill
Tonedale
Wellington
Somerset
TA21 0AW
Tel 01823 652400
www.somersetwildlife.org

Appendix 2 List of Consultees

The Landscape Character Assessment & Management Guidelines have been produced in association and consultation with the following key organisations:

Blackdown Hills AONB
Clinton Devon Estates
Country Land and Business Association
Devon County Council
Devon Wildlife Trust
Dorset AONB
East Devon AONB
East Devon District Council
Environment Agency
Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
Forestry Commission
Mid Devon District Council
Natural England
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Somerset County Council
South Somerset District Council
Taunton Deane Borough Council

Appendix 3 Glossary

Note: This glossary is not a complete coverage of all words or terms used in the study.

Ancient Woodland Land continuously wooded since AD 1600. It is an extremely valuable ecological resource, usually with a high diversity of flora and fauna.

Biodiversity The variety of life including all the different habitats and species in the world.

Combe A short valley or hollow on a hill or coastline, often dry valleys in a limestone area.

Coppicing The practice of cutting semi-mature or mature trees back to a stump, thereby encouraging regrowth and providing timber products.

Cultural pattern The historic development and present day pattern of settlement and farming.

Curtilage The enclosed area of land around a dwelling. It is distinct from the dwelling by virtue of lacking a roof, but distinct from the area outside the enclosure in that it is enclosed within a wall or barrier of some sort.

Downland A downland is an area of open chalk hills.

Ecological corridor An area of vegetated land linking other areas of biodiversity interest, encouraging the spread of plant, animal and insect species.

Estuary The broad mouth of a river that flows into the sea, where fresh water mixes with tidal sea water.

Field pattern The distinctive pattern created within the landscape by the size and shape of contiguous fields. The relationship between size and shape is often strongly related to the age of the pattern itself. Irregular, smaller fields are generally older than larger, more regular field patterns.

Habitat The place where a particular species lives and grows. It is essentially the environment—at least the physical environment—that surrounds (influences and is utilized by) a species population.

Heathland Usually open habitats characterized by a mosaic of dwarf shrubs and taller vegetation, including some tree species, associated with unimproved areas underlain by infertile acid soils.

Hedgebank Earth bank or mound cast up from adjacent soil to a height of 4-5 feet/1.2- 1.5m, with a hedge established along the crown of the bank.

Hedge laying A traditional country skill, typically found in the United Kingdom and Ireland, which seeks to create and maintain of hedges by removal of some trees, retaining others, with a proportion of appropriate branches part cut and laid tight into the hedge bank or ground.

Hedgelaying cycle or rotation The period of time between each major intervention in the growth of the hedge.

Historic Landscape Characterisation
A method for understanding and mapping the nature of the landscape with reference to its historical development.

Indigenous Plants or animals belonging naturally to or occurring naturally in a particular area.

Interfluvium An area of dry land between two watercourses.

Joint Character Areas/ National Character Areas The Character of England maps the variety of landscape character at the national scale. It comprises 159 Joint (or National) Character Areas, combining English Nature's Natural Areas and the former Countryside Commission's countryside character areas.

Land cover Combinations of natural and man-made elements including vegetation that cover the land surface.

Permanent pasture/grassland An established plant community in which the dominant species are perennial grasses, there are few or no shrubs and trees are absent.

Planned Refers to a more recently enclosed area of land, that is often characterised by regularity in shape, and is usually large in size.

Plateau An extensive area of relatively flat high land, usually bounded by steep sides.

Riparian Associated with the banks of watercourses.

Rough ground Land that has little agricultural potential, even as formal enclosed grazing, and is usually open, unenclosed and possibly used for common grazing.

Saltmarsh An area of land which is usually, or liable to be, flooded with salt water and is covered with a low growing layer of salt-tolerant plant species.

Scrub Vegetation consisting of stunted trees and evergreen shrubs collectively.

Semi-natural habitat Vegetation which has been modified by humans that is still of significant nature conservation interest because it is composed of native plant species, is similar in structure to natural types and supports native animal communities.

Settlement pattern The predominant pattern of settlement in an area.

Spring line mires Areas of wet ground associated with watercourses upwelling at geological boundaries.

Turbaries An area of land that has been formerly designated as a place where peat may be dug.

Undercliff A terrace formed above beach level from material that has fallen from a cliff.

Unimproved pasture/rough pasture Pasture that has not had the addition of fertiliser and/or reseeding with more productive grass species.

Wildland Extensive areas of uncultivated, mostly unenclosed land, including moorland, heath and salt marsh, characterised by the virtual absence of human habitation. Often remote.

Appendix 4 Data Sources

Data provided by Devon County Council

Ordnance Survey 1:10,000 mapping
Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 mapping
10m contours mapping
Geology – solid and drift mapping (British Geological Survey)
Historic Landscape Characterisation

Data provided by Somerset County Council

Historic Landscape Characterisation

Other data sources

Soil survey paper maps (The Soil Survey and Land Research Centre)
Landscapes of Settlement: Prehistory to the Present by Brian K. Roberts, Routledge, 1996. – also, digital maps derived from this work by University of Reading
1995 farm census data – University of Reading
Ancient woodland – downloaded from the MAGIC website (www.magic.gov.uk)
National Typology – downloaded from the MAGIC website (www.magic.gov.uk)

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